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UNDER THE TRICOLOR;

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OR,

THE AMERICAN COLONY IN PARIS.

A NOVEL.

BY

Mrs LUCY HAMILTON HOOPER.

PHILADELPHIA:
J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.
LONDON: 16 SOUTHAMPTON ST., COVENT GARDEN.
1880.

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DEDICATION.

TO

MRS. JOHN W. MACKAY.

My lady is wondrous fair to see,
  With sapphire eyes and with silken hair,
And a cheek whose pillow a rose must be,
  For a rose-flush lingers there.

Like to a snow-wreath shows her brow
  Under the shade of its dusky curls,
And a sea-wave kissed her mouth one day,
  And left there its coral and pearls.

And yet we confess a subtler spell,
  Past grace of outline or charm of hue,
There's something behind those beautiful eyes
  More beautiful than their blue!

As shines the sun through a painted pane,
  Touching its azure and red and gold
With such a glory, that gazing eyes
  Are dazzled as they behold,

So passing glances that seek her face
  But to admire remain to bless,
For the light of a lovely soul within
  Transfigures its loveliness.

And when I look on those sweetest eyes,
  The charm of the skies themselves I find,
The loveliest azure that earth can know,
  With Heaven itself behind!

PARIS, November 1, 1879.

04-6-33 AMB

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Haunted	7
II.	Madame Magne's	25
III.	The Vanes	33
IV.	Compensations	56
V.	Mrs. Harding Speaks her Mind	68
VI.	Ursula	89
VII.	Castles in the Air	108
VIII.	The American Colony	133
IX.	The American Colony (Continued)	149
X.	Regnat Cœlum	163
XI.	"Love Smote the Chord of Self"	178
XII.	Mrs. Bryan	188
XIII.	The End of a Vengeance	208
XIV.	"A Sound of Marriage Bells"	226

UNDER THE TRICOLOR,

OR

THE AMERICAN COLONY IN PARIS.

CHAPTER I.

HAUNTED.

A HOT, sultry night,—one of the very few really warm nights that I have ever known in Paris, for the air usually freshens into a pleasant coolness with the going down of the sun even in midsummer. The atmosphere is stifling, loaded as it is with emanations, more pungent than agreeable, from the stable on the ground-floor. Away on the breezy avenues around the Arc de Triomphe, or on the wide sweep of the boulevards, the night may seem less oppressive; but here, in my little bedroom at Madame Magne's *pension*,—third floor back, overlooking the court,—the heat seems intolerable. Heigh-ho! what would I not give for a bath-room with its tub filled to the brim with clear, cool water, or even for an ice-pitcher, dewy, tinkling, tempting, such as used to be mine for the asking in the old days which—— But stop! I must not get off upon *that* strain, or I shall not sleep another wink for the rest

of the night. I strike my repeater, and its tiny bell chimes the quarter-past one. I punch and shake up my hot, limp pillow, a true boarding-house pillow, with a handful of feathers sparsely dispersed through its thin ticking, and I coil myself up in an attitude of determined drowsiness, resolved that I *will* go to sleep. For what will my letter to the "Daily Postal-Card" be worth if I get up to-morrow with a heavy head, dulled and stupefied with loss of rest? Those daily pages of manuscript knock loudly at the door of my brain and cry peremptorily, "Go to sleep!"

No use,—no use. There is a mouse nibbling loudly in the wainscot, and two or three are prancing about the room, for this old house is as full of mice as a hive is of bees. Luckily, I am not afraid of the creatures, so I merely turn languidly on my bed and watch them chasing one another over the floor by the feeble glimmer of the night-lamp. I tire of this amusement after a few minutes, and I take to counting the hideous flowers on the drab wall-paper,—huge red and blue and orange tulips with long spiky leaves. One, two, three,—one, two, three,—I get up to a hundred after a while, and yet I am as wide awake as ever. Sleep is apparently not to be wooed by such trivial devices as these.

And then—most dreaded torment of these dreary nights—there comes gliding from the dim recesses of my brain the ghost that haunts my pillow whenever sleep deserts it,—the ghost of my past life. No terrible spectre is this, such as one reads about in sensational novels or hears of in gloomy melodramas, nor does it come to whisper of sad hours and woe-

ful scenes. On the contrary, it is a lightsome ghost. Its lips are wreathed in forgotten smiles, and its garments bear the scent of faded roses; and it delights in sketching for me fair scenes that once were and that never more shall be. To-night it paints for me the glories of a summer night at Long Branch; the solemn moon above a silver sea, the long, cool piazza gay with groups of merry guests, the cold rush of the sea-breeze, the pleasant chat of friends and acquaintances rising in an atmosphere that to inhale is in itself a delight. Meanwhile, the horses stamp in the stable below, and the pungent, sickening odor reeks up into the close night-air. I take to counting the flowers on the wall-paper again, and my thoughts stray back to my pretty, airy bedroom in Blank Street, Quakeropolis, with its Albusson carpet, its delicate china, its pearl-tinted walls, the books and pictures which—— No, this way madness lies. I must think of something else. But how? The spectre that I drive away successfully with hard work or study in my daylight hours now holds me captive, as the Ancient Mariner did the wedding guest of old, and I *must* listen to its tale.

My past,—my past! If I could but dig an unfathomable abyss, or roll a Lethe torrent betwixt it and myself! If I could only forget that I had ever slept softly, and fared daintily, and dressed gorgeously, and dwelt in a sumptuous home, and collected books, and delighted in society and music and all bright and pleasant things,—if I could indeed only forget that I had ever been Jane Anson, the heiress and the rich old maid, and could remember

only Jane Anson, the newspaper correspondent in Madame Magne's back room, how much happier I should be! My past,—my past,—you are cruel with your sharp, continued stings, small as gnat-bites, it may be, but painful as the prick of a poisoned dagger. I sometimes think that the position of a woman, reared in the extreme of wealth and luxury, and suddenly reduced to utter poverty, might be likened to that of a butterfly in a spider's web. Amid the sunshine and the roses of a summer's day, ere half its merry flights and gay dalliance with the flowers are ended, the poor insect finds itself all at once caught and enmeshed in a captivity crueller than is that of the grave. The old, bright life is over; nothing is left save a series of unavailing struggles, till, kinder than is Destiny to human beings, the poison-fangs of the tormentor bid all struggles cease, and the poor, hollow form, once instinct with life and gayety, falls loosened from the snare, never to float and flutter in the sunshine any more. And while still life endures, does not the poor creature, quivering in the meshes that will hold it till it dies, find an added torture in the scent of the blossoms on whose breast it shall never rest again; in the sigh of the breeze that will never more bear it onward in its flight; in the sunshine, whose golden glory glows undimmed by one poor atom's pain? I, though no butterfly, heaven knows, from my own experience would surely answer, yes.

And yet, have I not everything that a reasonable being need ask for in this world,—pork and beans

for dinner, an alpaca gown to wear, a third-class bedroom at a third-class boarding-house; nay, truly health, and strength, and brains to work with, and a small but sufficient income, gained by constant, yet not uncongenial, toil? Have I not been unusually fortunate in securing my present quarters at Madame Magne's, where, for an infinitesimal sum per week, I enjoy the luxury of a tiny parlor of my own in addition to my bedroom? And really, what with my few books and a photograph or two, and an embroidered shawl converted into a table-cover, my little parlor does not look so much amiss. When I have saved up money enough to buy a clock and a pair of candlesticks for the mantelpiece, it will have quite a homelike air.

But—and here's the rub—my troublesome memory persists in painting for me far different scenes, against which my shabby surroundings at Madame Magne's show with a painful effect of contrast. If I could only get rid of all recollection of the drawing-rooms into which I was first carried, a three-years-old child in my nurse's arms, it would be all the better for me. But those vast, cool parlors, panelled in solid oak, with painted seasons shedding flowers or snow-flakes, as the case might be, upon the walls, and furnished with genuine Gobelin tapestry, whose delicate designs were the admiration of my childish heart, are living memories still. And then my library,—each book in which was a beloved friend, from the Boydell Shakspeare (which my father gave me on my tenth birthday, because, as he said, when remonstrated

with on the unsuitability of such a present for a child, he wanted his little Jenny to have a library, and it was none too soon to begin buying really valuable books) down to the latest edition of Balzac, which was sent home from the binder's just before the crash came. All gone, my dear old father,—and the massive silver service as well that was to have been your little Jenny's wedding silver. It is well that you had quietly slipped out of the world long years before, and gone where there are no commercial crises, nor falling stocks, nor defaulting trustees to hunt you out of one of those fair mansions of which it is written that there be many in Our Father's house.

I give up the question of sleep altogether when I reach this point in my meditations, and I spring out of bed with something of the same eagerness that one of the victims of the Inquisition may have shown when released, not wholly shattered, from the rack. I throw on a loose wrapper, and kindle a candle by the pale spark of the night-light, since gas there is none in the bedrooms of the Magne pension, no more than in any of the bedrooms of the Grand Hotel, or of any other first-class Parisian hotel. And so I take up my note-book, and strive to write by the dim light in the hope of tiring my brain into drowsiness, so that I may creep into my bed just as the sun is rising, and snatch an hour or two of slumber before I am summoned to breakfast. What shall I write about? There is no particular subject that commends itself in any very pressing manner to my notice. I think, with the

peculiarities of my surroundings borne in upon me by the present state of the weather, joined to my recent musings, that I will say a word or two about the Pension Magne itself.

The house is a shabby old affair enough. It stands in one of the narrow streets that stretch between the Boulevard de la Madeleine and the Boulevard Haussmann. The street itself was a fashionable locality about a century ago. At the corner of the boulevard there may be seen a very gorgeous façade with grimy statues in grayish stone, the remnant, I am told, of a hotel that was built for the celebrated dancer, Mademoiselle Camargo. But the old house in which Madame Magne has unfurled the American flag could never have been handsome or commodious in its best days. It is a conglomeration of small, inconvenient suites of apartments, with a door cut here and a passage thrown out there, so as to facilitate the transformation of the old building into a boarding-house. The kitchen is on the second floor, and is installed in what was once a good-sized drawing-room. Like all French houses, the edifice is built around a court; which court is a conglomeration of hideous smells, though kept in a state of tolerable cleanliness. But there is a gigantic barrel for refuse in one corner, and a stable opening into it, and a hopper for waste water placed outside of the window of the staircase-landing on each floor, so that the atmosphere at times is simply pestilential. I wonder sometimes that we do not all die of typhoid fever. But then the prices are so low, and the table is so

good, and Madame Magne herself is such a good, kind-hearted, jolly old personage, that one cannot but overlook the dreadful odors. And after all, when one is poor, one has to put up with disagreeable things of some kind or another wherever one may be. I might, it is true, get board at the same price in the Pension Pescara, which is a much "sweller" house on the Rue de Rivoli, with a gay outlook and a good sunny exposure. They have a handsome public drawing-room, too, at the Pension Pescara, and a plated epergne for the dinner-table, and the table is waited upon by men in white cotton gloves, and not by jaunty little Alsatian girls in white caps and aprons, as at Madame Magne's. But they feed you on horrible messes there, and not half enough of those; the bread is coarse and the butter strong, there is a suspicion of horse-flesh in the beefsteak, and a certainty of worn-out sheets in the matter of breakfast table-cloths. There are many pleasant people too to be met with at the Pension Pescara, but there are also *demi-mondaines* of the lowest class among the boarders. Perhaps, too, I might find a cheap garret in the aristocratic establishment of Mrs. Manners, but I do not care to live within a stone's throw of the Trocadéro, some two miles away from all the galleries and shops and promenades of the city. Moreover, her wealthy New York *clientèle* would be sure to criticise unfavorably my best dress (a twenty-dollar black cashmere costume from the Bon Marché); and my black alpaca, with a darn in the sleeve, would set me down in their eyes at once as a creature beneath contempt. Jane Anson, the

heiress, would have had a very charming time at Mrs. Manners's, but Jane Anson, the newspaper writer, had best keep out of the way. For that is one of the lessons of adversity that is not sweet in the learning, whatever the uses of adversity may be according to the poets. Was not Mrs. De Pompadour, of East Eighty-sixth Street (brownstone front, two doors from Fifth Avenue), my very *dearest* of friends for a long term of years, who used to pay me long visits and invite me to her house, etc., etc.? And did I not call to see her after the universal upheaval of all things, just before sailing for Europe, and did she not politely ignore my existence all the time that I remained in New York? And did I not get a letter from her the other day, requesting her "dear Jane" to buy for her six dozen of kid gloves at the Bon Marché, and keep them till a favorable opportunity for forwarding them free of duty should present itself? The only line received from her since trouble came upon me. No, no, Miss Anson. Your acceptability in New York society vanished with your fortune. Brains you may have, my dear,—you probably *have* got them or you could not make your living by them,—but what are they, when weighed by Fifth Avenue, in the social scale against a garret bēdroom and an alpaca gown with a darn in the sleeve? No, no, my dear,—best keep away from the elegant boarding-house of Mrs. Manners, if you do not want to be forced to realize, more bitterly than ever before, that you are that pitiable object, a woman "who has seen better days." Rather abide forever

amid the worn carpets, and the soiled wall-paper marked by the greasy locks of many a generation of boarders, the horse-hair sofas with broken springs, and the other delightful decorations of Madame Magne's cherished drawing-room.

I cannot say that I have made many friends among my fellow-boarders. I have always disliked boarding-houses very heartily, so I creep off as soon as possible after meals to my own little parlor, where I can write, and read, and meditate at leisure. Mrs. Jopling, who decidedly leads the politics of the house, has frequently expressed her opinion that I was "stuck up." Mrs. Jopling is from Oniontown, Connecticut. She taught school there, I believe, and is great in good works. She is tall and thin and severe of aspect, wears a false front and a black stuff gown, fashioned after the style that was in vogue some forty years ago, and spends her days between the Louvre and the shops. Not that she buys so much in the latter establishments, but as she always tries to purchase every article that she wants at just half the price that is asked for it, her shopping consumes much time and is apt to result in sharp altercations between her and the tradespeople. She is always rushing off to the Consulate or the American Legation with a grievance, and coming home highly wroth at our officials, who will not see her righted in the matter of five francs overcharge for a bonnet, or the misfit of a dress, for the making and trimming of which she had bargained to pay six dollars. Then there are Mr. and Mrs. Hoxton, who live in the *entresol* rooms. Mr. Hox-

ton is a retired livery-stable keeper, and his wife used to go out "a-tailoressing," as she has frequently informed the assembled multitude. She is a good-natured, kind-hearted old dame, who murders the President's American with a cheerful smile, telling us pleasantly, for instance, how she has just bought a polonay "in black welgit for three hundred frank." As to the President's French, she commits worse havoc whenever she tries her hand at a few words or names which make up her vocabulary in that language, though she has lived here, "off and on, my dear, for summat nigh three year," as she said the other day. She is a good old soul and a kindly, but it requires the memory of all her best qualities to restrain one from laughing outright when she remarks in a loud, cheery tone that "she and her husband went to walk on the Shams Elizas and stopped at a calf" (*i.e.*, a café), or that "she has an errand to do on the Rue Noove de Petty Shams," meaning the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs.

Very different in type are the Welfords,—mother and daughter,—who have taken the front bedroom, first floor, for a month. They are from the interior of New York State, and are full of the second-hand airs and graces of the metropolis. They are both pretty, the mother especially, who looks scarce ten years older than her eighteen-years-old daughter; both slender and graceful, with unimpeachable figures, blue eyes, and abundant fair hair. One sometimes has to ask oneself why such people as the Hoxtons, for instance, ever come abroad. They care nothing for the sights of Europe. Its

historic associations are to them a sealed book. Its art attractions ditto. They do not go into society. They dislike the unaccustomed food and the unusual ways of doing things. But in the case of the Welfords there is no scope for wonder. They have come abroad to buy things, and they are buying them. For them Paris is one enormous shop. They spend their mornings at the Bon Marché, their afternoons at the dressmaker's, and they have their things tried on in the evening. I asked Mrs. Welford the other day if she had visited the Salon while it was open. She held up her hands with an air of pretty deprecation. "*I* go sight-seeing," she cried, "when we are so busy with our preparations to go home! My dear, what *can* you be thinking of? We have too many important matters on hand to waste our time in running after pictures. Just think,—Minnie and I are getting from ten to twelve dresses made for each of us, besides gloves, and mantles, and bonnets, and fans,—oh! I feel quite worn out when night comes, I do assure you. Perhaps, when we get through our work, we may take a day or two to look about the city. But really these towns in Europe look all pretty much alike. Some are bigger and dirtier than the rest, and that is all the difference. Yes, we *did* go to Vienna, and we had a delightful time there. We got quantities of that sweet leather-work, and such pretty things in gilded bronze. I liked Geneva extremely; the shops are lovely, and I bought Minnie an exquisite locket there,—*so* cheap,—only five hundred francs. But I did not think much of

Chamouni, which is only a village you know, and the crystal beads that you get there are quite out of fashion now. As to Italy, we did not see it very thoroughly, as we had to hurry back to Paris to order our outfit before going home. Rome is terribly exhausting, but the jewelry there is charming, and I got some superb sashes for a mere trifle. Turin is really striking on account of its cheap gloves. Sarah Bernhardt?—who is she? Oh, yes, we did talk of going to see some old play or other at the Comedie Française the other night, but after spending the whole day at Bon Marché I felt too tired, so we gave it up." Just then a summons from one of the numerous tradespeople that are dancing attendance on the lady daily put a stop to the mild stream of Mrs. Welford's eloquence, and she hastened from the room.

Miss Welford is the object of a sincere but respectful admiration on the part of a spruce young clergyman, Mr. Jannis, who hails from Tennessee, and who is spending his summer in Europe preparatory to taking charge of a church or a parish somewhere in the Southwest. He is a guileless young man with a perpetual simper, and he sits with his head on one side and looks at Minnie Welford as though she were some new revelation of loveliness to his astonished gaze. Perhaps she is,—but at all events he might conceal the novelty and force of his impressions. The poor, dear soul is greener than the greenest grass, to use a slangy expression, and his ignorance about all matters and things connected with France or with French his-

tory is refreshing from its very depth and perfection. Only the other day he said to me with his usual amiable smile, "I have been told that I ought to go to see the column that stands on the site of the Bastille. Now please tell me what *was* the Bastille?" I rather applaud myself for the self-denial that prevented me from informing him that it was a restaurant.

Miss Clint, now,—the little old maid who occupies the best bedroom on the first floor,—she too knows nothing whatever about Paris or the French, and she is altogether unconscious that her ignorance is in anywise unusual or surprising. I do not think that she knows much about anything outside of the town of Buttonville, in the interior of Maine, where she was born and bred, and where she lived all her days till some sudden freak or impulse impelled her to exchange her quiet country home for the wonders of this gay and gigantic city. She is well-to-do in the world, wears solitaire diamond ear-rings morning, noon, and night (to let people know that she is a lady, as she privately informed me), and has ideas about dress, which ideas she carries out in a rather extravagant manner. She has ordered a black silk at Worth's, and a bonnet at Virot's, and torments half the ladies in the house to go shopping with her. She is small and spare, with a trim, upright figure that shows off her new and costly garments to good advantage, and she has the sense to confine her purchases to rich articles of one color only, namely, black, so that she is really well and tastefully dressed. But why in the world did she ever come to Europe

at all? That is a problem the solving of which has sorely puzzled my brain. Culture she has none. The pictures, the statues, the architectural wonders of the great city bring no revelations to her vacant little brain. She described to me the other day a large palace outside of the city which she had been told to visit, and where Queen Victoria's rooms were shown to sightseers. It was some time before, in this vague description, I recognized Versailles. She insisted on going to the Salon with me on the occasion of my last visit there. I expected to be grievously bored by my companion, but, on the contrary, I was greatly entertained. The length, and depth, and breadth of her ignorance showed sublime in illimitable extent. With the sole exception of the scriptural pictures, the subjects of the paintings were as sealed books to her. Cleopatra dying of the asp-bite, for instance, was to her an unsolvable mystery. I told her the story of the Egyptian queen, and she opened her eyes and mouth very wide and said, "Law suz!" She was a good deal shocked by the nude nymphs and Venuses, but recovered herself somewhat before a painting representing Juliet lying dead on the corpse of Romeo. "Now, who were *those?*" she asked, for her curiosity and thirst for knowledge were insatiable. I told her briefly, imagining that at least she must know something about Shakspeare. "But are they asleep?" she inquired, on learning their names. "No," I answered; "they are dead,—this is the catastrophe of the tragedy. Surely you have heard of Shakspeare's *Romeo and Juliet?*" She backed off so as to take another

good look at the prostrate figures, and then approaching me, she remarked in a confidential tone, "French people, weren't they?" That remark was too much for my already sorely tried risible faculties. I fled precipitately to the architectural department, where I astonished a staid guardian of the peace by going into shrieks of laughter before a huge drawing representing the façade of a Grecian temple.

Miss Clint is very intimate with an elderly bachelor, Dr. Driscoll, of San Francisco, who has come over here on a vacation, and whom I strongly suspect of drawing her out, as he delights in conversing affably with her about the wonders of Paris. He is a keen-witted, intelligent personage himself, and I have an idea that Mrs. Hoxton's French and Miss Clint's description of works of art and historic places afford him an immense degree of enjoyment. The other day the latter lady remarked to him that she was so sorry the Hôtel de Ville was burned down, as it must have been ever so much finer than the Grand Hotel, and she would have liked to have stopped there. I believe he was on the point of sending her to take rooms at the Hôtel de Montmorenci, in the Faubourg St. Germain (the private dwelling of the family of that name), but seeing that the poor, dear soul was quite ready to take his advice he thought better of it, and "took it all back," as the children say.

Then we have Miss Denckla, who is a medical student, spending her vacation in Paris with an eye to the hospitals. She is a sharp-looking, black-eyed girl, about twenty-five years of age. She tells me

that she means to devote herself to the diseases of children, and that she dissected six infants with a view to discovering the origin of membraneous croup just before leaving home. Her next-door neighbor at table is Miss Swinton, an art student, young, pretty, and not quite twenty, who is to enter Vinoy's class of young men to draw from the nude living model next week. Just opposite to her sit Miss Lily Walker and her mother, the daughter a regular little American beauty, with peach-like cheeks and large dark eyes; the mother, dry, angular, and sharp-looking. Miss Lily is studying singing with a view to becoming a prima donna, and she dreams of coming out at the Grand Opera and achieving an immense success. She has about as much voice as a mouse in a cheese, but is great at runs and roulades, and trills and chromatic scales, and she bangs away at Madame Magne's rickety old piano pertinaciously in the accompaniment to the "Ah fors'é lui" of the "Traviata," which every woman who can sing three notes feels bound to murder in some manner or another. Meanwhile, Mrs. Walker runs about and bores every manager in Paris to give her daughter a hearing. And they go to call on all manner of celebrated people in the most extraordinary of toilettes, to offer the daughter's services as a vocalist. I declare they went to see the Queen of Spain the other day, and Miss Lily insisted on warbling "Ah fors'é lui" for her Majesty right then and there. And I'll wager anything that the next budget of American papers will contain the news that "Miss Lily Walker, the dis-

tinguished American prima donna, sang an aria from La Traviata at the morning reception given by the Queen of Spain, her exquisite beauty and finished vocalization being much admired by the distinguished guests who were present."

But the pale gray dawn is shining in at my window, putting to shame the gleam of my miserable candle. A cool breeze has sprung up with the coming of the daylight; my eyes grow heavy and my nerves have been calmed by this outpouring of my meditations to my old blank-book, the sole confidante of my worries and miseries, for I am not one of those who go around crying out their troubles on the shoulder of the universal public. Did not Mrs. Jopling say to me the other day, "Miss Anson, what an unvarying flow of good spirits you have! I quite envy you,—you are always so gay and light-hearted." "Wise judges are we of each other," as Claude Melnotte replies to a similar remark from Colonel Damas. After all, it is well that I have caught the trick of cheerfulness, and cannot go wailing through the world, even if I would. What a nuisance I should be to my friends and acquaintances in Paris did I once take up the whine appropriate to my position as "a woman who has seen better days"! No, no, old book, to you and to you only I shall confide my troubles, my regrets, my ideas about the present, my moan for the dead joys of the past, my fears for the possibilities of the future. I close you now and lay you aside, for your mission for to-night is ended. And now to bed, "to sleep—perchance to dream" my usual vision

of hurrying breathless from room to room of my old home, pursued by a shadowy form, that finally succeeds in hunting me out of the open portal into the dreary, storm-scourged night. That dream came true long ago, and the name of the spectre was Poverty.

CHAPTER II.

MADAME MAGNE'S.

THIS morning finds me inclined to take a more cheerful view of things. I have driven away the ghosts that haunted me with a comfortable breakfast and some hours of good hard work. My daily stint of writing is ended. My small parlor has been swept and neatly arranged, and with the awning drawn down to exclude the sun it presents a pleasant appearance. I indulged in the extravagance of two sous' worth of roses from the barrow of a passing flower-woman this morning, and they are now blooming opposite to me in a cracked Venetian glass goblet (picked up at a bric-à-brac shop for ten cents), and they diffuse a dainty perfume through the room. The house and the court-yard are very quiet,—so quiet that I can hear every word that Madame Magne is saying in her shrill, high-pitched French soprano to her head-servant and general factotum, Mathilde, down yonder in the big dining-room on the first floor. Sundry phrases

about "impudence," and "the third floor, front," and "good enough for anybody," reach my ears, which, coupled with the vibration of the bows in her big lace cap, which I can distinctly note as she stands gesticulating at the window, rather inclines me to think that Madame Magne is out of temper.

She is very often out of temper, is Madame Magne. She is a peppery little Frenchwoman, all fire and spirit, every inch of her, yet with the best heart in the world hidden under all the flashes and flame of her combustible nature. She is everywhere at one and the same moment. Now down in the cellar, inspecting her store of wine, now up in the garret, investigating the condition of the maids' bedrooms, then popping into the kitchen to see how the preparations for the next meal are getting on, or whisking through the parlor to make sure that none of the guests have ventured to put their feet upon the sofas (an act which she holds in especial abhorrence, though I never could tell why, as the stiff horse-hair covering is already as shabby as natural ugliness and much wear can make it), and finally flying out of the house to make some necessary purchase, and flying back again as rapidly; she is always on the go, and that as fast a "go" as possible. She gets up at four o'clock in the morning, and trots off to the great Central Markets to buy her provisions at the early auction, when bargains in food may really be secured, and from that hour till ten in the evening, when she pats off to bed like a tired pigeon, she is never still for a moment. She is only to be seen in her full

pride and glory at the dinner hour. Then she changes her working dress for a stiff blue silk, made in the fashion of some fifteen years ago, that fairly stands on end with richness; she dons a cap of real lace, adorned with many bows of pale-pink ribbon, a broad old-fashioned collar to match, and a gold watch suspended to a massive gold chain. Thus attired, she superintends the serving of the meal; and when the dessert is placed upon the table, she patters from one group of guests to another, asking each set in turn, with a broadly smiling countenance, "Eh bien, Messieurs et Mesdames, avez-vous bien diné?" She knows well what answer she will receive, for her viands, though plain, are of the best quality, and exceedingly well cooked. And her table appointments are all of the same character,—plain, but good of their kind. She delights in handsome table-linen, and can show you table-cloths and napkins that she bought when the plenishing of the Tuileries was sold at auction by order of the Republican government in the autumn of 1870.

Madame Magne speaks English exceedingly well, with a certain quaintness of phraseology which renders her speech at times very piquant. She is a short stout little body, with gray, stiff, sausage-shaped curls, arranged on either side of her broad and rather florid countenance. She makes no pretence at either elegance or refinement; in fact, there is no vestige whatever of pretension about her sturdy character. She prides herself on her honesty and her integrity, and, indeed, her word is as good as

her bond,—a rare qualification in this land of cheating tradespeople and swindling landlords. "I'm none of your puff-ups, but I'm *true*," I heard her say to an American party the other day when in the act of closing a bargain. She never attempts to conceal the fact that she began life as a cook, and that her acquaintance with the English language was gained during long years of service in English and American families. Her first attempt at hotel-keeping was made in the Quartier Latin, where she opened a house for the accommodation of American and English students. It throve and prospered, and she finally emigrated to the right bank of the Seine and opened the Pension Magne. Now she is a celebrity, and deservedly so. There is scarce an American in Paris but knows the taste of her waffles and buckwheat-cakes, or has dropped in to dinner on some great national holiday, such as the Fourth of July or Thanksgiving Day. She glories in the fact that the United States Minister himself has come to eat waffles at her table, and that the son of General Grant, when travelling in Europe, was brought to her house to dine one day by a friend. I should have liked to have seen her cap on that day. The bows in it must have stuck out stiffer and higher than ever before.

It is a mystery to me how this little bustling woman, the incarnation of energy and go, ever came to marry Monsieur Magne. That individual is about as slow a specimen of humanity as I have ever chanced to encounter. He is a fat, flabby-

looking old fellow, a few years younger possibly than his sharp little wife, but older far in all essential respects than she. He is slow and lazy and good-natured, and intensely economical by nature, as are most Frenchmen of the lower orders. The liberal scale on which Madame manages her housekeeping fills him with misery. He groans over every grain of the excellent coffee that goes to make the rich, perfumy beverage that daily lends a charm to the breakfast-table. Half the time he spoils the salad by surreptitiously cribbing the greater part of the oil and vinegar allotted for the dressing, an act that only leads to more reckless extravagance, since the guests call wildly for the cruet-stand in consequence and deluge their salad themselves. He waters the wine on the sly sometimes till it is wellnigh undrinkable, and he is suspected of having a private hoard of broken sugar, filched lump by lump from the public sugar-bowls. Fortunately, Madame Magne is well acquainted with his tricks, and never fails to pounce down upon him sooner or later. Then will ensue a stormy scene, much relished by those boarders who dwell on the court and view the fray from behind their lowered blinds; a fray wherein Madame's shrill soprano will be punctuated by such mild exclamations as "Mais, ma chérie,"—"Mais écoutez donc," from Monsieur, and which invariably ends by the lady's flouncing off in one direction while the gentleman departs in another, with many shrugs of his fat shoulders and shakings of his bald head. For Madame Magne knows well that

the reputation of her house rests on the excellence of her table. It is that which fills her rooms in despite of the shabby furniture, the ill-conditioned, old-fashioned, inconvenient building, and even the evil smells that haunt her court-yard. So she will brook no interference with any of her arrangements, and therefore Monsieur Magne's participation in the management of the house is of the slightest. He attends to the decanting of the wine and to the filling and trimming of the lamps, and these arduous duties once attended to, he usually takes Madame's fat little spaniel, Fifine, out for a walk, and is seen no more till dinner-time. She is a good little wife to him nevertheless; she keeps him supplied with a moderate amount of pocket-money (which I shrewdly suspect him of gambling away at dominoes in the neighboring wine-shops), and she gives him plenteous and dainty repasts. He generally goes to sleep after dinner at the window of his wife's little parlor, and nods there till ten o'clock, when she patters off to join him. She, too, has a little weakness. That very moral-looking tea-cup that is brought to her every evening full of a clear, brown liquid, that she declares is "le thé noir Anglais," holds no decoction of a Chinese herb or my nose deceives me strangely. No, no, Madame Magne; it is not for nothing that Mathilde gets out a certain black bottle from the closet every evening just before she goes to brew your tea. It is a saying among the boarders, that if one can get hold of Madame Magne after she has taken her tea of an evening, she will tell you any-

thing that you want to know, or promise you anything that you want to obtain, from fresh curtains at the windows of your bedroom to a new carpet and a set of new chairs for the parlor. But with all her quick temper and her mysterious cups of tea, how good the little woman is to be sure! How kindly she nursed the poor young artist who came to her, not half recovered from an attack of Roman fever, two years ago! How gentle and sympathizing she was to the young married couple whose baby died of croup in her best bedroom six months ago! and how keenly she felt for the bereaved mother! *She* ask five hundred francs indemnity for a death in her house, as is the custom with French landlords in general? No indeed. The only bad debts that I have ever known her to make, keen business woman as she is, were those contracted by parties who knew how to take advantage of her abounding kindliness of disposition and softness of heart. Witness the pretty creature who came here with a very good-looking youth whom she said was her brother, and who managed to remain here for some three months without paying a penny, decamping at the end of that time, and leaving behind her only a lot of empty trunks, and all because she told a piteous tale of poverty and distress, and a husband who had deserted her, and heaven knows what other stuff besides. But, as a rule, Madame Magne is pitiless to people of doubtful character. She swoops down on them at once, and makes arrangements for their immediate departure with all the promptitude that characterizes her proceedings in general.

I can usually tell by the commotion in the house when there is any arrival of importance expected. Madame puts herself out very little for the letting of a single chamber, but when one of her best suites is engaged by a family, with the prospect of their remaining for some time, there ensues much rushing to and fro, and a general putting to rights and cleaning up of the engaged apartments. Consequently, I imagine that these third-floor rooms have been taken this morning. It is a rather "swell" set of rooms, with a look-out over the street, and a private staircase at the other side of the court. Stay,—did I not hear Mathilde say something about Mr. Stephen Vane and his family while we were at breakfast? Assuredly I did,—and then too Mrs. Upton, when last she called to see me, told me that Mr. Vane had left his present apartment on the Boulevard de Clichy because his landlord had raised his rent, and that he meant to store his furniture and board till he could find another place that exactly suited him. Stephen Vane, the artist,—I have gone to his studio to see his portraits with Mrs. Upton, and I remember him perfectly,—a tall, thin, distingué-looking man, with profuse snow-white hair, and a thick white moustache, elegant and dignified in his picturesque black velvet coat as Cabanel himself. Nay, as I sit here the whole story of his life, a romantic history enough by the way, is unfolded before me from out of some hidden nook or corner in my memory. I shall inscribe it here, as it is worth the telling, but to do so I must take up a fresh sheet of paper and change

this worn-out and worthless pen for one that it will not worry me half wild to write with. Moreover, I must find out if it is really he who has taken the third-floor rooms. I do not care to waste my time in meditating over a person whom I may never see again, or at most as a mere casual acquaintance. But a fellow-boarder,—*that* is different.

CHAPTER III.

THE VANES.

Yes, it is really Stephen Vane and his family who are coming to occupy the newly-arranged rooms on the third floor, the family consisting, by the way, of two individuals only, namely, Mrs. Clyde, Mr. Vane's mother-in-law, and his daughter and only child, Ursula. Mathilde has just come in to bring me a note, and has volunteered the above particulars.

What do I know about the Vanes? Like a story in an old book, whereof one turns the pages carelessly, lighting every now and then on some familiar passage that recalls the contents in their entirety, the whole history, which happened years ago, comes bit by bit before my mental vision. It was one of the scandals of Quakeropolis, so long ago that half the actors in it are dead and buried. It begins, as do many of the romantic tales of the circulating

library, with a stern father and a stolen marriage. Only, romance is never half so charming when acted out in real life as it is in harmless black and white, shut between the shabby covers of a half-bound novel.

I sometimes think that pride of birth, when it really does exist in our republican country, takes a far more stubborn and bigoted form than it does in those lands where it is, so to speak, the genuine growth of the soil. For it to spring up at all among our people in defiance of uncongenial surroundings and the unfavorable atmosphere of public opinion, argues in the shoot a strength of root and a hardiness of nature that render it a tenacious weed, and one that it is impossible to eradicate. And if ever a born aristocrat lived and flourished beneath the shadow of the Stars and Stripes, it was old Richard Vane. In him the prestige of noble and ancient blood (for he claimed a lineal descent from that Sir Harry Vane from whom Oliver Cromwell once prayed to be delivered) were united to those of great wealth, and a certain high-bred refinement of nature that stood him in lieu of a powerful mind or great intellectual acquirements. In fact, I do not think that he rated mental qualifications very highly. Accomplishments and intelligence were all very well for those unfortunate beings who were not rich and had no blue blood in their veins, but for one who was at once a Vane and a millionnaire such little adjuncts were unneeded. Of course a certain amount of culture was necessary, as a picture, even by Cabanel, is all the better for a coat of superfine

varnish. But it was the world's business to learn the language spoken by the Vanes, and not the business of a Vane to acquire any language that did not come to him or her naturally in the form of the mother-tongue. Social elegance belonged to the family by right of inheritance. I never saw in all my life a more perfect gentleman in all external respects than was Mr. Richard Vane. His high-breeding was so faultless that you never noticed it any more than you notice the clothes of a man who is irreproachable in his dress. When he listened to the remarks uttered by any lady of his acquaintance, for instance, his eyes, his attitude, his whole being was eloquent with the subtle flattery of deferential and concentrated attention. His conversation was seldom marked by any depth or brilliancy, but his air and accent lent it an indefinable charm. He would talk about the weather, or the last scandal, or the latest dinner-party with a tone and expression that somehow conveyed to the listener the idea that he was becoming the confidante of the most hidden secrets of the speaker's soul.

Yet this gentleman of irreproachable manners and long descent was far from setting the world an example, so far as his domestic relations were concerned. His selfishness was of as perfect and refined a type as were his manners. He never lost his temper, and it would have been well if he *had* lost it, and for good and all, for in its normal state it was diabolical. His wrath was of the icy quiet type, easily aroused and impossible to appease. He was as cold-blooded as a Norwegian and as vindic-

tive as a Spaniard. He married a warm-hearted little Southern heiress, who loved him with all her heart, but who was as quick-tempered as she was fair and loving. She would flash out at him sometimes like a thunder-storm,—all rain and lightning and fervid gusts,—and he would stand on the hearth-rug, with his hands behind him, whistling softly to himself an air from some favorite opera. In half an hour she would be sorry for her vehemence, and would come like a petted child to "make up"; and then he would refuse to speak to her for a month. In two years she died, fretted to death by her aristocratic husband's peculiar temper it was said, and leaving behind her an only son—Stephen.

Now Stephen Vane in nowise resembled the impetuous little beauty, his mother. He was the perfect reproduction of his father, in every particular save one. Richard Vane was an intensely selfish man, but he was an intensely proud one as well. No hope of personal gratification would ever have led him to sully the escutcheon of the Vanes by any weak or unworthy deed. His vices were those that the best society does not scorn to accept among its attributes. His son grew to manhood, presenting in every line of his person, in every grace of his manners, the peculiarities of his sire. But he was not only selfish but self-indulgent as well. He had indeed inherited some portion of the family pride, but he would have torn the genealogical tree of the Vanes to shreds if that sheet of parchment, all-important in his father's eyes though it was as it

hung, framed and glazed, in the spacious sombre library, had been flung in his path as an obstacle to the proposed gratification of any of his cherished whims. With such resemblances and such dissimilarities of character, it is no wonder that the father and son took to quarrelling as the latter grew out of childhood. Perhaps these scenes of dissension were the cause of the resolution suddenly taken by Mr. Vane, of sending his son to Oxford to finish his education. The constant collision with a nature so like and yet so unlike his own must have been anything but agreeable to that household autocrat. He had never been abroad himself, a fact that rather puzzled those among his acquaintances and associates, who knew how deep-rooted was his scorn of our republican institutions, and how fervent was his admiration of England and the English aristocracy. Possibly Mr. Vane, like the representatives of a good many more of our old families, did not care to bring his claims to aristocratic descent into competition with those of the Percys and the Beauforts. "Among the blind a one-eyed man is king," saith the French proverb, and Mr. Vane probably realized the truth of that wise saying, as well as the force of that oft-quoted line from Paradise Lost,—

> "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven."

So young Vane went forth into the world, with his future career marked out for him in well-defined lines. He was to complete his collegiate course with as little trouble and as much credit as might be made compatible. He was afterwards to travel

on the Continent for a year or two, and see something of the best society in Paris, Rome, and Vienna. Then he was to return home and marry the future Mrs. Stephen Vane, to be chosen of course from the female scions of the "first families" on the wrong side of the Atlantic. He got through the first part of the programme tolerably well. His sojourn at Oxford was marked by no brilliant achievements it is true, but then Mr. Vane cared nothing whatever for intellectual distinctions. It was "the thing" to send his son to college, and he had sent him. The Vanes were independent of collegiate honors,—such distinctions could add no lustre to their long descent and ample fortune. But in an evil day for himself and all concerned, Stephen one day, whilst on a visit to London, accepted an invitation from a fast young nobleman to join a party at Richmond. The guests of the occasion comprised, besides several fashionable young men, a certain number of actresses from the minor theatres of London. Among these was a dazzling little blonde, known to her friends and the public generally by the name of Lottie Lisle, her real name being probably Smithers or Wiggins, or some such other undistinguished patronymic.

She was a wonderfully beautiful little creature. I have seen a portrait of her painted a few months before her marriage by a distinguished French artist, which represents her as a perfect specimen of that rosebud type of loveliness that is so irresistibly attractive to poor weak masculine humanity. Her form though small was faultlessly proportioned, her

features were delicate in outline and piquant in expression, and her complexion, that resisted with the triumphant force of youth and perfect health the combined ill influences of stage-cosmetics and late hours, was wonderful in the pure freshness of its coloring. Young Vane, like the headstrong, foolish boy that he was, fell madly in love with her on the spot. She was a few years older than he in actual age, and centuries older in cunning, tact, and knowledge of the world. Intoxicated by her beauty, blinded and maddened by the first serious passion of his life, and lured on by the manœuvres of as scheming a little witch as ever wore pearl-powder, just six weeks after the dinner at Richmond, which had been the scene of their first meeting, he committed the irreparable folly of converting Miss Lottie Lisle into Mrs. Stephen Vane.

How he could ever have imagined that his haughty father would consent, not only to receive such a daughter-in-law, but to overlook so terrible a shock to his pride, I cannot very well imagine. Probably he never thought much about it at all. He had never been accustomed to deny himself anything that he fancied; he fancied Miss Lisle, and could obtain her on no cheaper terms than those of matrimony, and so the deed was done. He married her with all due formality in a mouldy little church not far from Drury Lane. Then he sat down and wrote a letter home to his father, neither excusing his act nor seeking to palliate it, but simply announcing the fact. It never seems to have occurred to him that his father would so far resent

his marriage as to cast him off altogether. Was he not his only son, the last living male representative of the Vane family in the direct line? He evidently imagined that he was an indispensable factor in the sum total of the possessions that went to make up the family pride of the haughty Richard Vane. No other possible heir was forthcoming. His father had no favorite brother or pet nephew who could step in and take his place, for, like himself, he had been an only child. He did, indeed, anticipate a certain amount of cold indignation, and looked forward, not without some feelings of pleasure, to a prolonged absence from his native land and from the coldly correct atmosphere of his home, as the sole penalty of his escapade.

The answer to his letter came at last. It was written, not by his father, but by Richard Vane's lawyer and man of business. It gave the young gentleman to understand in curt dry terms, all the more telling from their passionless brevity, that he was no longer looked upon as a member of his father's family. A small property which had belonged to his mother, and the revenues from which amounted to some fifteen hundred dollars annually, would be settled upon him, and would constitute his entire pecuniary resources for the remainder of his days, at least so far as his father was concerned. Neither he, nor his wife, nor his children, if any should be born to him in the future, would be recognized or assisted in any way by Mr. Richard Vane. And across the bottom of the page that gentleman had written just six words and had

appended to them his signature. These words were, "I no longer have a son."

The mingled indignation and amazement of Stephen Vane at finding himself thus cast off and disinherited can better be imagined than described. As to his wife, her wrath was unbounded, particularly when she found that the absence of any law of entail in the United States permitted Mr. Vane to dispose of his property as he pleased. The ill-matched pair, only linked together by headstrong passion on one side and by cold calculation on the other, soon wearied of an existence that was made up of endless recriminations and reproaches. For Mrs. Vane's temper was by no means as charming as her person. She stormed when they were compelled to exchange their elegant rooms at Fenton's Hotel for cheap lodgings; she quarrelled about the lack of a carriage, and grew abusive when her husband refused to permit her to order dresses at Elise's, and gloves and perfumery at Henligant's. Finally, she declared that she would return to the stage; it was much more amusing to act in burlesque than to sit up in a stuffy room with a horrid cheat of a man who had duped her into marrying him. Her husband shrugged his shoulders and told her to go by all manner of means. He had grown weary of her, almost before the honeymoon was ended. Selfish and heartless as Stephen Vane really was, he was at least refined, and the language and manners of his beautiful wife, now that the glamour thrown over him by her radiant loveliness had wholly departed, jarred upon him at every turn. He deter-

mined to go to Paris and to study art there. He had always had some taste that way, and had spoiled much canvas *en amateur* before leaving home. His wife, of course, should be free to go where she liked.

He announced this determination to her one day over their scant breakfast. She lifted her eyes quickly from the egg-shell she was idly chipping to pieces, and looked him full in the face. "Very well," she said, "I'll go,—I'm none so fond of you, Stephen Vane, that I want to hold on to you in spite of yourself, and I've had a good offer to go to the States next month,—fifty pounds a week and all expenses paid, and that's a sight better than starving here with you on a beggarly three hundred pounds a year. You may keep your money if you'll just sign off all claims on my salary, and maybe we can get divorced some day and forget that we were ever fools enough to get married. But, mind you, I'll be revenged upon that old curmudgeon of a father of yours before I die,—I'll bring his pride down a peg or two before I've done with him!"

Her husband broke into a low laugh as he rose from the table. "Only do that much for me, Charlotte," he answered, "and I will love you as I never have loved you yet."

"I don't want none of your love," she retorted, sharply, "but I mean to have my revenge." And so the husband and wife parted, never to meet again in this world.

Six weeks later, every bill-board and temporary fence in Quakeropolis flamed with the announce-

ment of the engagement at the Butternut Street Theatre of the celebrated English burlesque troupe in the new and brilliant burlesque of the "Fairy Pink Petticoats, or the Princess, the Prince, and the Pigeon-Pie," the part of Prince Prettylegs to be taken by Mrs. Stephen Vane, better known to the profession and to the public at large as Miss Lottie Lisle. To obtain the favor of the latter line in the advertisements Mrs. Vane had waged a fierce warfare with her manager, and had made some pecuniary sacrifices. For that worthy had insisted on her retaining her maiden name, while she had vowed that she would appear under that of Mrs. Stephen Vane or that she would not accept the engagement at all. Finally the little lady had her own way, on condition of accepting a somewhat smaller salary. She would have acted for nothing rather than have foregone her cherished purpose of doing all that she could to hurt the pride of Richard Vane. To subject that proud name to the degrading publicity of a theatre-poster was the dearest hope of her soul. She had indeed written him a fierce and very ill-spelled letter from London, declaring her intention of coming to the United States to act under her married name if he still refused to do anything for her husband or herself. It was the receipt of her own unopened epistle by return mail that had spurred her into the arrangements that culminated in her appearance on the stage of the Butternut Street Theatre, in the rosiest of tights and the shortest of tunics, as the princely hero of one of the flashiest and least witty speci-

mens of that essentially silly form of entertainment, the English burlesque.

Her Quakeropolis engagement was an immense success. All the fashionable set rushed to the theatre to see what manner of daughter-in-law fate had bestowed on proud old Richard Vane. The young girls of the severe and select circle from which it had generally been understood that Stephen Vane would choose a bride, went *en masse* to contemplate the woman whose beauty had overthrown the well-matured plans of one father and of so many possible mothers-in-law. The young men, Stephen's contemporaries, went to see what had induced "Steve to make such a fool of himself." The elder members of "our best society" went to shake their heads regretfully over the cruel blow that had been dealt to that estimable gentleman, Richard Vane, whose fine old wines and skill as a whist-player rendered him so congenial and agreeable an acquaintance. The house was nightly packed to suffocation with audiences that, for style and social position, might have rivalled those of the first three nights of a week's season of Italian Opera at the Academy. "Fairy Pink Petticoats" enjoyed a great success for a fortnight, and might have kept the boards for a month had not the engagements of the troupe to appear in other cities prevented.

Much curiosity was of course expressed respecting Mr. Vane's feelings and ideas whilst his daughter-in-law was prancing about the stage of the chief theatre of the city in the scantiest raiment permitted by the police regulations of the place,

and while he could not stir outside of his own door without being reminded of the humiliating fact by some flaring poster or perambulating advertisement. Photographs of Mrs. Stephen Vane in the character of Prince Prettylegs, in that of the Spirit of the Wave (the costume of this last being composed mainly of a scarf of green gauze and a few branches of coral), and finally as her piquant self, in a dashing walking costume, with a very provoking little hat cocked jauntily on one side of her head, were offered for sale in all the shops, and could not fail to meet his eye at every turn. But whatever he thought, or felt, or suffered he kept strictly to himself. He never altered his daily habits in any particular. He took his customary walks, went to the club, paid visits and accepted invitations as usual, and was even seen strolling past the Butternut Street Theatre with an expression of calm indifference upon his aristocratic features. Nobody dared to broach the subject to him,—Richard Vane not being the style of person with whom liberties may very easily be taken. Of course conjectures and rumors on the subject were rife, and his impassible countenance was scanned with minute care and intense interest. That cold, finely-cut face told no tales however. The steely blue eyes and compressed lips kept their own secrets. Only men remarked, with that half-cruel interest that we usually take in the tragedies wherein our best friends and oldest acquaintances are actors, that the carefully-brushed locks had grown visibly whiter in the past few months, and the lines around the

inscrutable mouth and eyes had deepened and become more numerous.

The brief and brilliantly successful series of performances of the English burlesque troupe came to an end, and the company departed to fulfil its previously formed engagements in other cities, with a promise of returning late in the following spring. All through that autumn and winter Mr. Vane was the recipient of sundry newspapers ablaze with dramatic criticisms, wherein the name of Mrs. Stephen Vane figured largely,—newspapers that he tossed into the fire, unopened and unread, after the arrival of the first batch. Finally, the burlesquers in their perambulations reached New Orleans, their last stopping-place before their return to Quakeropolis. Their engagement there promised at first to be highly successful. But just as the furore for the English blondes was at its height, just as the name of Lottie Vane was in everybody's mouth, and she herself had become the idol of half of the fashionable young men in the city, the yellow fever, fostered by an unduly mild winter and an early spring, made its appearance and put a stop to all gayety and all theatre-going. The usual exodus of strangers and nervous inhabitants took place. Among the first to depart was the English manager of the burlesque troupe and the greater part of his company. Mrs. Vane, however, refused to take her departure with the rest. She had promised to be present at a champagne supper which was to be given at Moreau's celebrated restaurant in her honor on a certain night by a

party of gay young Creoles and Frenchmen, and she meant to stay for it. Her admirers, thoughtless young men long since acclimatized if not to the manor born, approved of her decision and applauded her courage. The supper took place, and was a very gay affair. Those who were present remember it as they might have remembered a certain feast mentioned in the Bible, when a spectral hand came forth and scrawled strange characters upon the lamp-lit wall, had they chanced to be numbered among the favorite courtiers of King Belshazzar. Mrs. Vane, the queen of the occasion, was looking her loveliest. With the pardonable caprice of a pretty woman and a petted actress, she had chosen to appear, not in conventional evening dress, but in one of the most gorgeous of her stage costumes, that of Queen Topaz in an as yet unacted burlesque called "The Garden of Gems, or Aladdin and the Genii." The corsage, entirely formed of imitation topazes, left bare her beautiful arms and neck, and imprisoned in its glittering outlines the supple waist and faultlessly moulded shoulders. Scant draperies of gold gauze veiled without wholly concealing the perfect limbs, and left exposed the dainty feet in their slippers of gold-spangled satin. The diamonds that flashed upon her throat and in her golden hair were real gems, but were outshone by her laughing blue eyes. Yet beautiful as was this singular costume, and lovely as the fair creature looked in it, its shimmering yellow hues struck those present with a twinge of unpleasant association. Some one of the guests,

more reckless or less reticent than the rest, remarked laughingly to Mrs. Vane on the peculiarity of the color of the dress she had chosen to wear under the circumstances. She burst into a peal of merry laughter. "Not Queen Topaz am I, but Queen Fever," she cried. "I meant it,—I meant it! We'll laugh old Yellow Jack to scorn. Here, gentlemen, fill up your glasses and drink to the health and long reign of Queen Fever, the Sovereign of the South!" Some of her gay young hearers laughed as loud as she and obeyed her; others, stung with a swift presentiment of evil, set down their wine untasted and turned away. Before the next day's sun had set Lottie Vane was stricken down with the fever, and twenty-four hours later she was a corpse.

The news of this sudden death travelled faster than on the wings of the wind, flying as it did on the swift pinions of electricity and steam. It reached Richard Vane sitting lonely and vindictive in the solitude of his splendid home; it reached Stephen Vane plodding sullenly with his canvas and pencils in his chosen class at the Beaux Arts. To the latter it brought strong hopes of a speedy restoration to the flesh-pots of Egypt; in the heart of the former it aroused no thrill of relenting towards his erring son. There was no fatted calf awaiting the prodigal son of the household; that species of animal was never pastured on the Vane estates. The woman who had caused the estrangement was dead, it is true, but not even death could wipe away the fact that for some months a low-born

player had borne the name of Vane, and had done her best to drag that honored cognomen through the mire. And it was Stephen Vane who was responsible for the whole bitter business, and who had given her the power to so disgrace the old family name. She was nothing but the accomplice in his wrong-doing. He was the true culprit. The death of his wife could no more set him right with his father than the breaking of a dagger or the bursting of a pistol in the hands of an assassin can free him from the charge of blood guiltiness. His instrument had failed him,—nothing more. So at least reasoned the elder Vane from the cold depths of his persistent resentment.

If any overtures towards reconciliation were made by Stephen Vane, they met with pitiless rejection. At all events the father and son remained apart, the latter working with the steadfast stubbornness that was inherent in the family at the profession he had chosen, the former living his usual life of elegant leisure as an accomplished man of the world, still admired and courted in society despite his advancing years. No ball was considered perfect without his presence; no dinner-party was held to be complete unless Mr. Vane was among the guests. He was grace and courtesy itself to the young belles of the day. People used to wonder why the petted widower did not take unto himself a second wife. Perhaps he feared to lose his social popularity; perhaps, too, he dreaded the mortification of a rejection, for in the earlier days of his widowerhood he had fallen madly in love witht an exceedingly pretty young

girl in a station in life something inferior to his own. He had proposed to her, and with the folly of spoilt and hoydenish girlhood, for she was somewhat fast as well as pretty, she had laughed in his face at the bare idea of marriage with a man old enough to be her father. The cold vindictiveness of the glance that he turned upon her stilled her ill-timed merriment. "You shall rue the day that ever you made Richard Vane your laughing-stock," he said, in cold, monotonous tones, whose lack of passion only made their meaning more appalling. And in truth she did live to rue it. A whisper, vague and blighting as the breath of a pestilence, soon after began to pervade society respecting her,—some hideous tale of wrong-doing to which her gay flirtatious ways lent corroboration. The influential set that held Richard Vane as one of its most cherished members erased her name from invitation lists and visiting-books. Her fashionable acquaintances cut her to a man, or rather to a woman. Heart-broken, crushed, and wretched, she withdrew from the city and went to live with a distant relative in one of the smaller Western towns, and the dignity of the Vanes was appeased. But that brief experience had taught Mr. Richard Vane a lesson, and he went no more a-wooing.

The years passed on. Sometimes there came to Quakeropolis a rumor of the art-progress of Stephen Vane. He had become indeed a portrait-painter of some note. He was celebrated for the success of his female portraits especially, his style being vague and poetic, with much airy background

of floating clouds and much idealization of the features and complexion of his sitters. He possessed, too, the gift of color, and joined to that the skill to catch and retain a likeness, even amid all the vaporization of his accessories and the idealization of the features of his sitters. Such a combination of gifts could not fail to win him success. His pictures were voted *so* sweet by admiring American girls on their travels, and the romantic history of the handsome artist, who had wedded for love and lost the world thereby, lent an additional charm to his productions in the eyes of those artless art-critics. He became the favorite portrait-painter of the American community in Paris, and installed himself in a spacious studio in the Quartier de l'Europe, which he filled with old tapestries, carved furniture, antique weapons, and bits of genuine Venetian glass, and wherein he showed, in his black velvet coat, with his finely-cut features, steel-blue eyes, and long white taper hands, as the most picturesque object of all his picturesque surroundings. Finally, his old friends and acquaintances in the United States were formally notified of his second marriage.

This time not even his fastidious father could find fault with the birth or prospects of the bride. The second Mrs. Stephen Vane was a Miss Virginia Clyde, the only daughter of a Georgian planter of fabulous wealth, whose family comprised, besides the young lady in question, two sons only, so that her prospective heiress-ship was decidedly important. She was a mere child at the time of her marriage, having been at school in Paris for two years

before it took place. A fancy for having her portrait painted led to her introduction to Stephen Vane, and his good looks, finished manners, and romantic surroundings did the rest. Her parents offered no objection to the match, Mr. Vane's family connections being so unexceptionable. Immediately after the wedding the happy pair went on a tour through Italy, the studio on the Rue de Boulogne being closed, as was generally thought, forever. After lingering for nearly a year in Rome and Florence, Mr. and Mrs. Vane returned to Paris, there to await the birth of Mrs. Vane's expected infant. The child proved to be a daughter, and was named Ursula after Mrs. Vane's mother. She was but six weeks old when the first shot, fired upon Fort Sumter, roused the sleeping echoes of war throughout the length and breadth of our land. Mr. Clyde, who was a hale old gentleman but a few years on the wrong side of sixty, at once returned to his home to offer his services and those of his two sons to the Confederacy. All three laid down their lives for the cause to which they had devoted themselves. The younger son died of camp-fever early in the hostilities, and Mr. Clyde and his oldest son fell at Antietam. The news of this last disaster killed Stephen Vane's fragile little wife. She was on the verge of her second confinement when the mournful tidings were incautiously imparted to her by her mother, who had resided with the Vanes ever since the outbreak of the war. Her infant was stillborn, and the young mother fell into convulsions that soon proved fatal.

Thus Stephen Vane once more found himself a widower and thrown on his own resources, save for the pittance secured to him from his mother's estate, for the Clyde fortune had been swept away in the vast stormy tide of the civil war. In fact, he was worse off than before, having now his little daughter and his mother-in-law on his hands to support. It was at this period that a final attempt at reconciliation between his father and himself was set on foot by some interested friends of the family. But it failed utterly, and never was renewed. Against the stony persistency of Richard Vane's resentment all argument or pleading was shattered as the waves are broken into foam as they dash against the Rock of Gibraltar. So Stephen Vane betook himself anew to the painting of portraits, a soured cynical man, with no soft spot left in his nature for any human being save himself. I doubt much, in fact, if he ever had loved anybody on earth except that prime object of his thoughts and affections. His first marriage had been a hot-blooded outbreak of self-gratification; his second was a cold-blooded speculation; both motives being equally selfish and equally unworthy. His daughter he sent to a convent to be educated as soon as she was old enough to learn her letters; his mother-in-law looked after his household affairs, and with the aid of one stout Normandy girl kept the small Parisian home in order.

When Ursula was about twelve years of age, Richard Vane died suddenly of some obscure form of heart-disease, the only evidence that he had ever given of possessing such an organ. Stephen Vane

at once closed his studio and went to the United States to look after his interests in the matter of his father's large estate, He returned a few weeks later more cynical and soured than ever. Nothing transpired respecting the provisions of the will, save that a thousand dollars a year was left to Stephen during his lifetime, and that the remainder of the property was to go to some unknown charity or public enterprise, being placed in the hands of trustees to accumulate for a certain number of years. The name of his granddaughter was not even mentioned. A sealed letter in the dead man's handwriting was found among his papers bearing the address, "For Mr. Stephen Vane." The contents of this document never transpired. But their effect upon the nerves and temper of the recipient was apparently the reverse of soothing.

Stephen Vane returned to Paris and took up anew the practice of his profession. But this crowning disappointment of his life seemed to embitter and harden his nature even beyond its usual cold selfishness. He was still to his sitters and to the world at large the graceful, elegant, accomplished gentleman, whose misfortunes had surrounded him with a halo of tender interest. But in his own home his cynical neglectfulness rose to a pitch of absolute unkindness. He would permit no change or diminution in his habitual luxuries, from his perfumed bath in the morning down to the dainty dish and bottle of good Bordeaux that he insisted upon having whenever he dined at home. The costs of his club-subscription, of his varied and numerous

suits made by Rechard, or Dusautoy, of his opera and theatre tickets, and of the occasional hire of a horse on which to show off his still graceful and well-preserved figure in the Bois de Boulogne, were all to be subtracted from the annual income before any provision could be made for the clothing or small luxuries of the two helpless women who were dependent on him for support.

His daughter Ursula is now, I am told, a very charming girl of eighteen, pretty, spirited, and intelligent. Her grandmother, Mrs. Clyde, bears the reputation of being a foolish but kind-hearted old lady. Well, I shall soon be able to judge for myself, for the rooms that they have engaged will be vacated in a week, and I shall then have the pleasure of making the acquaintance of Mrs. Clyde and of Miss Vane. Stephen Vane I knew long years ago when we were both of us younger, and were blessed with more of this world's goods than we are at present.

CHAPTER IV.

COMPENSATIONS.

LOOKING back on all that I have said respecting the Vanes, it does indeed look as though I exaggerated to myself the importance of their arrival.

For, what to me is the coming of another family into this crowded caravansary, unless perchance I cherish in my heart of hearts some hope of finding a friend, or at least a pleasant companion, in one or the other of the trio? For thus far I have discovered no congenial associates among my fellow-boarders. I cannot interest myself in Mrs. Welford's gowns, or Mrs. Jopling's squabbles, or the stories of managerial intrigues and the jealousies of professional rivals, which Miss Lily Walker's mamma is only too fond of pouring into my unsympathizing ear. And the presence of some really pleasant person (whether old as is Mrs. Clyde, or young as is Miss Vane, it does not much matter which) would add a new interest to my life.

Not that I lack acquaintances or even friends, and I might have had more had I brought abroad the letters to certain prominent American families resident in Paris which I could easily have obtained. But mental suffering, like bodily pain, indisposes the person enduring it for any exertion of a social nature. I felt like a wounded animal that wants

to creep into a corner and there agonize in silence and solitude. It is true that when the first sharp pang had passed away, and I had gotten a little used to doing without everything that I had once thought essential to the comfort or elegance of life, I managed to pay and receive some visits. And in wandering about this new strange world I did meet occasionally with angels unawares. Life is seldom so dreary a desert that its sandy paths may not sometimes be fanned by the white waving of heaven-sent wings.

If I were a painter, I would immortalize on canvas some of the beloved faces that have lent lustre to my lonely life, but I can only try to feebly fix their outlines here in the treasured volume that serves me in lieu of a flesh-and-blood confidante. First and earliest of my friends came Mrs. Upton, the fair and kindly wife of a great Western banker, for many years past a resident of Paris. The mother of a bevy of blooming daughters, she shows among them like a sunny summer-scented peach in a garland of rosebuds. Full of brightness, gayety, and animation is she, the life and moving spirit of every social circle in which she finds herself, mirthful as a child, unselfish as a flower, generous as the sunshine, a ray of which she so much resembles when she comes sparkling in, all life and radiance, to disperse with her brightness the gray cloud that always seems to brood over my stuffy little parlor. I love to think of her and to recall her as I saw her first at a grand dinner-party, in her gorgeous Worth toilette of white satin and white brocade,

whose lustrous colorlessness set off so perfectly the smooth, fresh cheek and golden, shining hair. I, in a black silk, made festive in its aspect by a trimming of lace,—the still unworn-out remnants of former elegance,—looked at her as Eve when shut out of Paradise might have contemplated some vision of herself among the roses and the bowers that once had been her own. I did not think that she, bright, prosperous, fêted, and happy, could trouble her sunny head about Miss Anson in her shabby gown. And yet how sweet, how winning was she that evening! Ah, dear, you builded better than you knew! Your gracious kindliness came to my poor, pain-wearied heart as the sunshine comes to some storm-beaten plant, laid prostrate by the pelting of the rain. I think of how you spied me out, sitting lonely and wearied on a sofa in the corner, with the spectres of past festivals over which I had once presided, joyous and prosperous, all thronging around me. You glided, "all gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls," from out the circle of your friends and acquaintances to cheer up the sad-looking stranger that you scarcely knew. I loved you from that moment, and I love you to this hour.

It was not for a year or two later that I made the acquaintance of Mrs. Bryan, the beautiful wife of the Railroad King of the West. She is much younger than am I, this gentle queen of a golden realm far wider and more gorgeous than ever a fairy called into being beneath the stroke of her wand. And yet, though her husband's wealth sur-

passes all ordinary methods of computation, she is as simple and unostentatious as a child. She wears her splendid destiny as she wears her splendid toilettes,—as an accessory to a personality that rises above all accidents of Fate. I look at her sometimes when she comes smiling into my little room as at an embodiment of all the choicest gifts of Providence. Accomplished, beautiful, and beloved, good and generous as she is wealthy, an idolized wife, a cherished daughter, a devoted mother, I sometimes feel like praying her to fling her sapphire locket into the Seine to conjure away the possible frown of Fate against a destiny of too perfect happiness. Even the Envy, Hatred, Malice, and all uncharitableness, that, like the dog-fiends of Mephistopheles, follow hard behind any conspicuously brilliant existence, have to take refuge in falsehood when snapping and snarling against her. "If you were but ugly, or vulgar, or wicked, or ignorant," I once said to her, "the world might forgive you your good fortune. If they could only say, 'Poor Mrs. Bryan! what a pity it is that with all her husband's wealth she is so—something or other!' they would do very well. But you exasperate poor, weak human nature by having everything that heaven can bestow, and so people needs must invent ridiculous stories about your wanting to buy the Vendôme Column and hang a lantern at the top thereof, and other equally probable anecdotes." And yet she is so good, so generous, so warm-hearted! Have I not seen those great lustrous blue eyes, the loveliest sapphires that she owns in spite of her

well-filled jewel casket, overflow with sympathizing tears, time and time again, when some pitiful story has been whispered into her ever-ready ear? And she puts so much delicacy and tact into all that she does, that a favor from her hands is sweet as the first flowers of spring. I sometimes feel inclined to take her soft, jewelled hands in my own and cover their gemmed ivory with kisses, reverent as those a devout Catholic imprints upon a holy relic, knowing as I do what doors they have closed against Misery and reopened to Hope.

I am glad that my troubles have not made me morbid or envious. It gives me no pain, but only pleasure, when these fair and gorgeously-attired women come rustling into my tiny parlor, filling it with the soft frou-frou of their satins, the shimmer of their jet embroideries, the misty richness of their delicate laces. Their exquisite toilettes arouse in me only a reposeful admiration for their carefully-planned beauty, the dainty blending of colors and shaping of trimmings, the union of all that is rich and costly with all that is most subtly tasteful. I like to note the perfect fitness of each part of Mrs. Bryan's costume to every other part, from the rose in her delicate bonnet down to the tip of her dainty slipper; I love to mark the becomingness of Mrs. Upton's white satin and pearls, or the snowy curve of her shoulders under her priceless point-lace shawl. I have always loved dress for its own beauteous sake as one admires a deftly-constructed bouquet or an elegantly-furnished room, and having been forced to relinquish its delights

myself, I am all the more keenly alive to its charms in others.

Sometimes, too, a manly step sounds on the rickety stairs, and there is a knock at the door, and a full deep voice says, "May I come in?" and there enters "unto me," as the old play-books say, a tall, stalwart youth, handsome and noble-looking, but with an indefinable look of wistful sadness in his great blue eyes. "The best fellow on earth," he has been called a thousand times. Poor George Brandon! Young, handsome, gifted, life is for him but a cruel struggle for the means of bare existence. He is an artist, studying diligently at the Beaux Arts, and plodding patiently in his little attic on the other side of the river, dining sometimes off of a morsel of bread, housed sometimes for days during a cold spell of wintry weather because his overcoat and warmest suit are in pawn, but always turning to the world a smiling face of uncomplaining patience.

The first time that I ever saw George Brandon was at a musical party given by an American lady who adores music and is steeped in science and Schumann to the very eyebrows. Now I, being a heathen as regards the coldly classical, whether in music, art, or literature, was wofully bored by sundry interminable symphonies in X minor, executed by ardent amateurs with more enthusiasm than knowledge of their art. Sitting half asleep in the corner, which has become my usual society haunt since I lost my fortune, I was suddenly aroused by the full deep tones of a manly voice,

rich and sonorous as was the wonderful organ that lent to the impersonations of Edwin Forrest half of their force and their impressiveness.

"'In a coign of the cliff between lowland and highland,
At the sea-down's edge between windward and lea,
Walled round with rocks as an inland island,
The ghost of a garden fronts the sea!'"

"Swinburne's 'Deserted Garden'!" I mentally exclaimed. "Who has had the taste and intelligence to choose that gem from out the tinsel heap of modern verse?" But long ere the solemn finale was reached I had forgotten the utterances in the utterer. There was a depth, a fire, a justness of expression, joined to a fervor of delivery, that lent a new charm to the verse of the poet, or rather gave fullest weight to its every beauty of thought or of cadence. And as I looked on the speaking face of the young declaimer, sensitive to every change of the spoken thought as a field of waving grass to the touch of the breeze, I felt that I stood in the presence of a born actor.

A born actor! Alas, poor George Brandon! "Promise me, George, that you will never adopt the stage as a profession," his idolized mother had said to him as he knelt beside her death-bed. And he promised, and he is here, struggling always, starving sometimes,—for Providence, that had gifted him with a genius for the stage, had bestowed on him no more than a talent for art. Poor George Brandon! And poor mother, in her pure conscientiousness, her pious narrow-mindedness, thus trampling her son's existence underfoot, and con-

demning him to suffering and to poverty, he who might have reigned a sovereign in his appointed realm!

Sometimes I wonder at the work that real genuine goodness consciously shapes out,—such work as the embodied spirit of evil himself could hardly do as well. For what worse fate could George Brandon's worst enemy have planned for him than that which has befallen him through the being that loved him best on earth? He, with the genius of a Booth or a Rossi stirring in his veins, is condemned to plod over designs for the fan-shops or sketches for the illustrated papers. He, who might be reaping the rich rewards accorded to the stars of the drama, has to toil night and day for scanty food and insufficient clothing. She knew not what she did, the delicate, loving, strictly-reared little woman, born of that old Puritan stock the descendants of which still survive beneath the shadows of our New England hills. To her, poor lady, the stage was but a starting-point on the road to perdition. Strange irony of Destiny, that gave this glowing genius to the fostering bosom of such a mother, a phœnix warm from its birth of flame nestling beneath the pinions of a brooding dove. I have seen her portrait, a miniature carefully colored by her son's tender hand. It shows a fair-haired, prim little matron, whose soft eyes contradict the story told by the precise dress, formal bearing, and thin, close-shut lips. George, like myself, was born and reared in affluence. But he was still a boy when misfortune overtook the family and swept away his widowed

mother's handsome income. She struggled hard to rear and educate her only son, and to repress in him his yearnings for the study of acting. Ristori, who once heard him read at a private party in Boston, had pronounced him the coming dramatic genius of the age, and this dictum had filled the heart of the Presbyterian mother with dismay. Hence, when stricken down by sudden illness, a few months later, she had uttered with her dying breath the passionate prayer that her son had granted to his own ruin.

Ah! if things only were as they used to be with me, how gladly would I help this poor, struggling boy (he is not yet twenty-five) to make his way in the world! And yet, what could I do to help him, had I all the wealth that gentle Mrs. Bryan has at her command? I could not give him the genius of Cabanel, or take from him that which seethes and glows undeveloped and repressed within his brain. And now, at least, I can give him sympathy and advice, a handful of fire to sit beside when the days are coldest, a lamp to light him as he draws when they are at their shortest, and sometimes, when a poem or a tale has found acceptance with an editor, I can invite him to dine with me, or ask him to accompany me to the third tier of the Comedie Française. On such occasions as the last, I walk home leaning proudly on the strong young arm and looking up at the fair head that towers so far above me, pleasing myself with the thought that had I ever married I might have one day possessed such a son. I suppose that every woman who is a true

woman at heart, holds somewhere hidden in the depths of her nature a reserve of maternal tenderness. It never may be called forth; she may never marry, or live a childless wife all her days, but the fount lies there, ready for the troubling touch of the angel. So I, old maid though I be, who, being short and stout and plain of face, resisted all temptations to matrimony in the days of my prosperity, find an as yet unstirred chord in my heart, thrilling with that tender fondness that a mother gives to her first-born for this youth, who is only akin to me through the close relationship of mutual sorrows and privations. Indeed, I learn content in contrasting his privations with my own. What are the pin-pricks of my daily life, the lack of suitable garments and refined surroundings, for instance, the sullied wall-paper and garlic-scented servants and shabby furniture at Madame Magne's, with the actual sufferings that he is sometimes called upon to endure, and that he does endure so uncomplainingly? And at least my work is steady, well paid, and congenial to my tastes, while he must strive for a mere pittance, with every fibre of his nature, every pulse of his being, warped from its original aim. Truly, George Brandon's worst enemy could hardly have wrought for him more cruel woe than did the mother who adored him.

Still he keeps his bright cheerfulness, his readiness to oblige, his winning sweetness of disposition, all unimpaired by the trials of his lot. And some of the pleasantest evenings of my sojourn in Paris have been passed in listening to his recitations of

modern poetry and of passages from Shakspeare, or in turning over his portfolio of sketches, each of which show a delicate fancy and a practised talent, but none the irrepressible impulse of inborn genius. *That* flashes forth when he declaims for me some one of the grand soliloquies of the Elizabethan drama, and when he stands before me transfigured for the moment into "Macbeth," "Hamlet," or "Iago," or the "Elder Brother" of Massinger's noble play. He has lived for days on dry bread and cold water, has my poor boy, but he has never parted with his little collection of the British Dramatists any more than with the portrait of his mother. Sometimes we plan wonderful works, whereof I shall furnish the letter-press and he the illustrations, and we build gorgeous castles in the air, whose walls are all hung with his pictures and whose libraries are all crammed with my books. And then we come soberly down to earth again, and over an Albert biscuit and a cup of tea we renounce all such attempts at aerial architecture—till next time.

I have, too, a very kind friend in Mrs. Thurston Harding, whose spacious drawing-room is as well known to the American residents of Paris as is the Continental Hotel or the office of the American Legation. Mrs. Harding has lived in Paris for over thirty years. Left a wealthy widow in the very prime of life, she quitted her native land, after the great affliction of her existence,—the death of her husband,—to take up her abode under the shadow of the tricolor. She has occupied the one handsome

suite of rooms, an *entresol* floor on the Champs Elysées, ever since her first arrival here. She has witnessed the dawn, the glory, and the desolation of the second Empire, the siege of Paris, the horrors of the Commune, and finally the regeneration of the beautiful city that has arisen, Phœnix-like, in new loveliness from its ashes. She has grown old now, and a chronic rheumatism, which has settled in one knee, prevents her from going a great deal into society or paying visits. But she keeps her reception-day still, and her caustic wit and unfailing flow of spirits always draw around her a choice representation of her country-people in Paris. She is a handsome old lady, with keen dark eyes, a profusion of silver-white hair, a Roman profile, and a tall, thin figure, always draped in the heaviest of brocades and the richest of velvets. She often sends me an invitation to drive with her, and those drives, or our cosey chats over a cup of tea (that inevitable ingredient in Parisian hospitality) in her little boudoir on her non-receiving days, form some of the pleasantest experiences of my life of exile. For she knows everybody and everything in the colony, does Mrs. Thurston Harding; she has seen generation after generation of American residents arrive here, take up their abode, and finally depart. And she has remained an American in heart and soul, having never, with all her long residence here, become so Parisianized as to forget or scorn her native land, as so many of her compatriots do. Therefore, with all her penchant for the people of her own nationality, there is a set of foibles peculiar to a certain class of Americans abroad

that never fails to call forth from her a display of sarcasm which delights me greatly, inasmuch as I sympathize with her most heartily on all such points. So whenever I get one of her square, uncompromising-looking notes directed in characters sharp and incisive as arrow-heads, I know that I am offered an hour or two of genuinely enjoyable and congenial companionship. After all, Life holds many delights for me even now. I could be perfectly happy here in Paris—if I were not so unhappy.

CHAPTER V.

MRS. HARDING SPEAKS HER MIND.

"A PENNY for your thoughts, Miss Anson," said Mrs. Thurston Harding to me suddenly the other day.

I was seated in that lady's landau when she thus abruptly addressed me. We were drifting slowly up and down the fashionable drive of the Bois de Boulogne, the Tour du Lac, so called I suppose because it is not a tour at all. Possibly fashion is supposed to drive around the lake, but fashion does nothing of the kind, going solemnly down to the end of that pretty, artificial sheet of water, and then turning around and coming back again with mathematical regularity and snail-like deliberation. The weather was charming. Through the close green

foliage of the trees filtered golden drops of sunshine that flecked the turf and roadside with vivid dashes of brilliancy. The unwholesome green waters of the lake caught an emerald-like lustre from the sunset glow. Over its smooth bosom flitted the gay barges of the more adventurous pleasure-seekers, with here and there a swan in pursuit. The drive itself was thronged. *Monde* and *demi-monde* were out in full force, and the landau of an ambassadress was not unfrequently grazed by the low, showy victoria of some *belle petite à la mode.* I had grown weary of gazing at the equipages, the toilettes, and at faces that were almost invariably either painted or plain, and had become absorbed in my own reflections when this sudden remark of Mrs. Harding's recalled me to a sense of the present state of affairs.

"I believe," I said, meditatively, "that I was thinking of home,—not of the one small spot in the United States that I claimed as a birthplace and a dwelling-place, but of my native land itself, and———"

"My dear," interrupted Mrs. Harding, looking solemnly at me from under the black laces of her parasol, "let me beg of you not to be patriotic. There is no quality more unpopular with a certain set of our country-people abroad."

"Only with a certain set, dear Mrs. Harding."

"Yes, and that set is by no means numerically strong, but like a stage army it makes up in noise and self-assertion for what it lacks in actual numbers. It is the grain of cochineal that colors the tub

of water. The water has a million times the volume of the cochineal, but then it is pure and cool and transparent, and so the dye gets the best of it. You know we have the proud distinction of being the only foreigners in Paris that are actually ashamed of their nationality. Who ever heard of an Englishman being ashamed of being born in England, or a Frenchman of France, or an Italian of Italy, or a German of Germany? But I can pick you out a dozen of American families in Paris that are quite mortified at the fact that they were born under the Stars and Stripes."

"And the reason?"

"Well, I fancy that their delicate and elevated natures shrink from the idea that they were born in a land that has no aristocracy. They do adore a title so cordially. And coming from a country where there are no titles, those delicious monosyllables, Duke and Count, have an effect upon their nerves quite equal to that produced upon the old lady's mind by 'that blessed word Mesopotamia' in the sermon, when she wept abundantly only because it rang so sweetly in her ears! Indeed, I have seen some of our American hostesses almost ready to go into hysterics when the usher flung open the drawing-room doors and announced a Prince. Said Prince being most probably a vendor of cigars *en gros*, and almost certainly a scamp."

"Why 'almost certainly,' my dear friend? Are there no decent nobles in the world?"

"Not very many that frequent the society of the American colony in Paris. You see, we hold here

an anomalous position. The old nobility—the Faubourg St. Germain set—never troubles itself about us at all. And if any of us are brought into contact with a member of it, the American, he or she, gets snubbed almost to a certainty. They look upon an American with repugnance for a variety of reasons. First, we are Republicans, or at least we are supposed so to be. Secondly, we are dreadful creatures that made our money in trade. Thirdly, we are improper and vulgar beings, who let our daughters talk and walk with young gentlemen and receive male visitors unchaperoned, and do other dire deeds that in their aristocratic eyes are 'tolerable and not to be endured.' And, fourthly, we are most of us heretics. That last is probably the worst point in our disfavor. For the Faubourg St. Germain is nothing if not intensely clerical and Legitimist. There are drawing-rooms in it in which the Place de la Concorde is never called by any other name than the Place Louis XV., where a twenty-franc piece is invariably a louis and never a napoleon, and where the Empress Eugenie in the heyday of her fortunes was always designated as Madame Bonaparte. But if you want to get into *that* set (and I'll warn you beforehand that the game will not prove worth the candle), there is one very simple way of managing it."

"And what is that?"

"Turn Catholic, my love,—become converted with much flourish of organs and swinging of censers. Contrive to be baptized into your new faith in a white robe, with a princess for your god-

mother, and let the ceremony take place at Ste. Clotilde, and there you are, to use a bit of English slang. Just look at the success achieved by Mrs. St. Paul Pickles. Her origin was decidedly 'shady,' to say the least of it, and then everybody knew that there was a queer story about her and the Baron Couturier, the Emperor's Lord-Gold-Stick-in-Waiting. In fact, she used to supervise the lists of invitations for the Empress's private balls, therefore one day the Empress asked why it was that she saw so few American ladies at her balls, and always the same set over and over again. So the matter was investigated, and it was discovered that the Baron used to let Mrs. St. Paul Pickles erase or add the names of her countrywomen as she pleased, and as she would only permit those American ladies to be invited who would consent to visit her, the number was small and not particularly select. Though there *are* some of our countrywomen abroad who would visit Jezebel herself if they could get an invitation to a royal ball by doing so. Or, perhaps you might successfully repeat the little game played by Mrs. Douglas de Saucisson when she went to Rome the year of the siege of Paris. She declared herself to be under conviction (is not that the proper phrase to use?), and had endless conferences with cardinals and archbishops, and read all sorts of books, and went regularly to mass, where she turned up her pretty eyes with appropriate fervor just in the right places. So, as she was stylish and wealthy, and dressed superbly, and gave very splendid balls, the Papal set thought they had

gotten hold of a Transatlantic pearl of price and took her up extensively. I am told that she saw more of the genuine inner social life of that exclusive old Catholic set than any American woman has ever done before. Well, when spring came and she had gotten tired of it all, off she went to Homburg, and was just as good a Protestant as she ever was."

"Now I call that a case of getting goods under false pretences," I remarked, laughing.

"Exactly. But then, as a general thing, our country-people are contented with a very inferior article of nobility. For there be titles and titles, my dear. There are just as many high-sounding names outside of the charmed circle of the best French society as there are within it,—ay, and as good old blood as well. Look at the old Duchesse de St. Aymon, for instance. There is as blue blood in her naughty old veins as ever ran beneath the epidermis of a Bourbon or a Hapsburg. I could get you an invitation to her house to-morrow, and she gives charming entertainments I am told, and you might be dining in the Bois with her next week. But you might as well associate with Tata Topaze, or Winnie Williams, or Bebé Wilson, as with her. She was separated from her husband long years ago, and, did the laws of France permit of a divorce, he might have gotten a divorce from her ten times over. But she is a genuine duchess for all that. Then there is the Marquise de Miravelle, whom I hear of occasionally at American parties. Now, the De Miravelles belong to the oldest and

best nobility of France, and Madame la Marquise is a very pretty, modest-looking lady, and takes wonderfully in American circles I am told. But I happen to know that she used to keep a flower-shop on the Rue Chirseul before her marriage, and that not one of the old Marquis's family will visit or receive her. And I could multiply such instances *ad infinitum.* For just so sure as you find a titled Frenchwoman taking extensively to American society, you may be sure that there is a screw loose somewhere. The men take to it fast enough; they will eat mine host's dinners, and drink his wines, and marry his daughters if they have good fat dowries, but they despise him heartily all the same. Do you think that any Frenchman would dare to do to any lady of his own class and race what the Duc des Diablerets did to Mrs. Molyneux Green last winter? You know Mrs. Molyneux Green, do you not?"

"I have met her at the receptions of the American Minister, but we do not visit."

"Ah, true, she does not recognize 'boarding-house people,' as she calls them, I believe, nor is she fond of associating with Americans of any stamp. She has a splendid hotel, entertains superbly, and has more titled men at her receptions than she has sandwiches or flowers. In fact, you can hardly turn round in her drawing-room without running against a count or a baron at the very least. The Duc des Diablerets was the intimate friend of the family, and used to dine there once a week, and was always invited to Mrs. Green's dinners and small parties,

being, in fact, the great gun of her social battery. She was getting out cards for a grand ball one day, when the Duke came to her and civilly requested an invitation for his cousin, the Baroness de Boisgontier, a scion of a noble provincial family,—just from the provinces,—staying at the house of a friend, etc., etc. Of course Mrs. Green was only too happy to oblige her dear Duke, so she sent an invitation with her card to the Baroness. The lady came to the ball very beautifully dressed, and received a great deal of attention, and called on Mrs. Green the next day and made herself generally agreeable; so much so that Mrs. Green took a great fancy to her, and invited her to dine with her in the Bois de Boulogne on the next fashionable day, and gave her a seat in her opera-box, and was altogether friendly and intimate. And who do you imagine that the *soi-disant* Baroness proved to be? One of the reigning celebrities of the *demi-monde* and the *chère amie* of Duc des Diablerets himself."

"Now, Mrs. Harding!"

"A fact, my dear, I do assure you. I had it from the lady herself in the first flush of her wrath and astonishment. But she has gotten over it now and is just as fond of titled gentlemen as ever. In fact, I am not sure but what she has pardoned the Duke and restored him to her good graces. One does not get hold of a real live Duke every day, you see."

"And is it actually true that Frenchmen who ought to be gentlemen—men of rank and social standing I mean—have been known to go uninvited to American balls?"

"Undoubtedly it is. Why, when the Goldenhearts gave that superb fête some years ago, there were two vicomtes and a marquis there who had come without the ghost of an invitation. They got a very civilly-worded one from the host before the evening was over—to go home,—but they certainly did arrive there uninvited. You must remember that we plebeian Americans are to these high-born and high-bred aristocrats as the dust beneath their feet. They would as soon hesitate to intrude unbidden upon one of our entertainments as a Southern planter, in the good old days before the war, would have hesitated before dropping in at a quadroon ball in New Orleans, or of making his appearance unasked at a corn-shucking frolic on his own plantation. I remember when the Stoneycrofts first came over here, many a long year ago, and used to entertain so magnificently, a certain young marquis who was always at their house was asked by a titled friend if he knew Mr. Stoneycroft. 'Know him? Not at all,' was the answer. 'I eat his dinners and I dance at his balls,—that is all.' However, the Stoneycrofts got on superbly after a while, and married every one of their daughters to titled gentlemen without a penny."

"Do you call that getting on superbly, my dear friend?"

"Of course I do. Is not success in one's cherished aims a thing to be grateful for? Blanche Stoneycroft is a Marquise, and Anne a Baroness. To be sure, Blanche's husband has been tremendously talked about with little Rose Beaupré of the

Varietés, and Anne's Baron has wasted two-thirds of her fortune at the gaming-table and on the race-course. But they are pretty good husbands as titled Frenchmen go. After all, it is easy enough for an American girl to marry a French nobleman, no matter what her parentage or antecedents may have been, if only she can afford to pay high enough for the privilege."

"Is a French husband, then, so very costly an article to purchase?"

"It depends upon his title, upon the antiquity of it, and various other things. I declare there ought to be a price-list hung up in some convenient locality, as they do wine-lists in the wine-shops, or as John Arthur, the real-estate agent, does with the record of the chateaux and cottages that he has for sale. And you must remember that the *sine qua non* of an aristocratic alliance now is a large and independent fortune. Wealth in America is subject to such sudden fluctuations (as you know by sad experience, my dear) that any Frenchman who has a good title to dispose of has grown wary, and will not strike a bargain till the money is not only paid down, but settled tightly in some such way that he is sure to enjoy the income of it as long as he lives. As to the cost of the article, you may have a Baron of moderate quality for about fifty thousand dollars. A good Count, with an ancient title and an old historical chateau, is cheap at a hundred thousand; but then the old chateau always wants a good deal of repairing, and so too, pretty often, does the husband. You cannot get a well-

authenticated Marquis under two hundred thousand, and a genuine Duke is scarcely to be had under half a million of dollars. But if one has a million, my love, one may soar at anything. Even the minor scions of the great reigning houses of Europe might be had for such a price. Of course if your aspiring Republican will be content to take a damaged article, such as a noble with a flaw in his title, or a newly-created count or baron, or one with a 'creature' in the background that must be pensioned off, she can get her husband at something under the regular cost. But I always feel inclined to say to these wealthy American girls, Buy—not pictures, books, or statues with your money if you are not æsthetically inclined,—but buy pug-dogs, Worth toilettes, laces, fans, jewelry, sugar-plums, anything, rather than a French husband."

"Do such alliances never turn out well?"

"Very rarely, if ever. I will not rely solely upon my own experience, but will quote what was recently said to a friend of mine by a countryman of our own who has lived for many years in Paris. He remarked to her, while conversing on this very subject, that he had seen during his residence here some sixteen marriages of American girls to titled Frenchmen, and that in *not one single instance* had the marriage resulted in the happiness of the wife. This experience was perhaps an extreme one, but the exceptions only go to prove the rule. However, what well-bred Yankee girl would not run the risk of life-long unhappiness to secure the glorious privileges of calling herself a Countess, and of

stamping her note-paper with a coronet? I'll do their lordships the justice to say, however, that they are perfectly frank and above-board in their little negotiations. There is no weak pretence of sentimentality about them. I remember when the Vicomte de Nargis was engaged to marry Jenny Hyde, he broke off the match as soon as his elder brother died childless, because, as he said very frankly, such a match was no longer necessary to him. And when the great heiress from Milwaukee, Lilian Westcott, was last in Paris, there was an old widowed Baroness who wanted terribly to secure her and her millions for her eldest son. The American lady whom the Baroness consulted on the subject hinted mildly that she did not think that Miss Westcott would be willing to dispense with all preliminary wooing, particularly as she had never seen the young gentleman in question. 'But my son *must* marry her, and that at once!' cried the old lady, 'for he is utterly ruined and has no other way of paying his debts!' Fortunately for herself, Miss Lilian was like Richelieu,—she did not see the necessity."

Just then an elderly lady passed us with a painted, powdered, pencilled creature, that wore the garments of a man with the cosmetics of a *cocotte*, lolling on the cushions of the carriage at her side.

"Who *has* old Blankenswergh got hold of now? You know the Blankenswergh, do you not? No? Then are you very anxious to make the acquaintance of a real live Baroness,—an American one at that?"

I confessed, laughing, that I did not yearn for such a joy.

"Very sensible of you, my dear, for though she is a good enough old soul herself, she is rather too fond of those who are the reverse to make her a pleasant or safe acquaintance for people who do not wish to affiliate themselves with the *hautes cocottes de la haute cocotterie.* In other words, she has a perverse penchant for spotted peaches (*vide* the Demi-Monde of the younger Dumas), and not content with luxuriating in that peculiar fruit herself, she makes a point of handing around the basket to all her American friends, and of asking them to come to take tea with her and have peaches and cream. She is old enough to know better, heaven knows, and well-born and well-bred too I am told (she was Miss Ann Smith, of Metropolisville,—*the* Smiths, you know); and if her intimate friend, Mrs. Moutonnoy, *did* accuse her of being the granddaughter of a cobbler, we all know that when intimate friends quarrel they are apt to say rather more than they intend. No, she is not a widow,—there is a Baron Blankenswergh somewhere, at Berlin or Vienna, or in some other part of the habitable globe, but you may be sure that wherever the Baroness is, there he most certainly is *not.* She has children as well,—married daughters who ought to look after the old lady and keep her out of mischief, but they, too, remain discreetly out of the way and let her do pretty much what she pleases. And she does get around her the oddest kind of people that ever a decent woman chose to associate with. The severe

American set receive her of course, for was she not a Smith and did not her daughter marry a Rayle? and all her little peculiarities are atoned for by those two great qualifications for the society of the exclusives. Besides, that rigid circle likes to relax its morals occasionally by associating with some such individual as our friend the Baroness, or that horrible old sinner, Willie Claye. To be sure, since that last-named personage got served up in the *Figaro* for that little affair of his with the glove-sewers on the Rue St. Honoré, he has been less prominently petted by his former friends. And as to the Baroness,—Madame Blank, as her intimates call her,—I did think that the Countess Massara business would have proved too strong to have been tolerated even in a Smith of Metropolisville. But events proved that I was mistaken."

"And who was the Countess Massara?"

"Well, the Baroness has, as I said before, a particular mania for taking her titled lady-friends around with her and introducing them to her American acquaintances. So one season, a few years ago, you never saw her anywhere without the Countess Massara, who was really a most charming person,—an Italian blonde, with the biggest blue eyes, and softest voice, and most exquisite figure imaginable. People used to smile at each other and say, 'Well, the Blankenswergh has picked up a genuine pearl at last.' The lovely young Countess was a widow. She resided in a superb hotel on the Parc Monceau, and drove the most elegant of equipages, and dressed to perfection, and was so modest and retiring withal

that it was quite delightful to look at her. The Baroness introduced her everywhere, and superintended the invitation-lists for her dinners and balls, and told innumerable stories about the past life of her interesting friend; how she had lost her husband when she was still so very young, how she had placed her two daughters at the convent of Les Oiseaux, what a retired life she had hitherto led, etc., etc. But one very odd fact was noticed in connection with the Countess, namely, that the members of the Italian Legation, or at least their wives and daughters, were never to be seen at her house. That little fact set people to thinking, and then to investigating, and finally the whole truth came out. The beauteous Countess Massara was no other than the ci-devant *chère amie* of the old Duke of Saxe-Spitzenbuben, and at the very time that Madame Blankenswergh was chaperoning her into American society the house on the Parc Monceau, and the Worth toilettes, and the elegant equipages were all being paid for by a certain foreign banker, well known in the high financial circles of Paris. You can imagine the scandal created by this discovery. The Baroness tried hard to uphold her friend, and drove, and dined, and went to the theatre with her to the very last, even after the whole story had been told and proved beyond a peradventure, but she could get no one else to follow her example. Then she tried to play the same game with the Duchesse de St. Aymon, but that lady was rather too well known in Paris, and *that* attempt failed. Her next protégée was pretty Kitty Veriphast, from

St. Louis, who eloped from her husband a few years ago with Colonel von Giessen, of the Austrian army (she afterwards married him when her husband got his divorce), but I rather imagine that her efforts on that last lady's behalf have been confined to her French acquaintances. Madame von Giessen, in fact, declares that she detests Americans."

Just then another carriage passed, with coachman and footmen resplendent in dazzling liveries of orange and scarlet, and with a coat of arms whose size was only limited by that of the panel emblazoned on the door.

"There!. If you do not wish to become acquainted with an American Baroness, what do you say respecting an introduction to an American Count? That carriage belongs to no less a personage than the Count de Serviette."

"A Count? yet an American? Any relation to the Fairfaxes of Virginia? the head of that family is an actual lord I understand, though he declines, like a true Republican, to bear his title."

"Nothing of the sort. In fact, the Count has not always been a noble. He came to Paris some ten years ago to practise the honorable profession of a corn-doctor, being then known as plain Dr. Nappykin. But after living here for a few years he discovered that he was the true, and only, and long-lost heir to the aristocratic family of De Serviette, all of whose scions were supposed to have been guillotined during the Terror. After that glorious discovery he assumed the title of his ancestors, and broke out into an astonishing eruption of coats

of arms. I believe that he has his crest engraved on the handles of his professional knives, for he did not relinquish his lucrative if inelegant calling when he became a member of the aristocracy. He attends to the afflicted feet of his patients and sells salve up to six P.M. Then he throws aside the Doctor and assumes the Count. He goes to balls with a veritable *batterie de cuisine* of orders at his button-hole, and his servants address him as M. le Comte with praiseworthy solemnity. Madame la Comtesse too has made her little discoveries. She has found out that she is the lineal descendant of Pocahontas, and that her oldest son in consequence is the head of King Powhatan's family, so she has had engraved on all his cards the proud title of 'Chief of the Wampanoags.'

"I sometimes think," continued Mrs. Harding, meditatively, "that it is a great pity Thackeray never came to Paris to study certain phases of the American colony. He would have collected some admirable material for an additional chapter to his 'Book of Snobs.' We often hear of our country-people who come over here, stay six months, and go back home, having forgotten how to speak English. But that is nothing to the number that come to Europe, settle down, and forget how to behave American. I remember one day how Mrs. Chesterfield Crosse was asked to write down the name of Washington at a fancy fair, and the poor dear soul could not remember how it was spelt, neither had she ever heard of such a plebeian publication as 'Harper's Magazine.' And Mrs. Hwing

Chung Foo (Lizzie Fluttermore that was), the wife of the Fourth Under Assistant Secretary of the Chinese Legation here, refused to take tickets for the American Charity Ball last year, because, as she said, she could not interest herself in anything that was not purely Chinese, and the Emperor of China might be seriously displeased with her if he heard of her being present at the ball. And then the number of Americans whose names

> 'Do suffer a sea-change
> Into something French and strange'

by residence in Europe is just wonderful. The Snobbins family, for instance,—they were always called Snobbins when they lived in Metropolisville, but when they came here they first became the De Snobyns, and now the old gentleman has bloomed out into the Vicomte de Snobyn, I believe. Did you ever hear of his wife's adventure with the pretty widow, Mrs. Grasscutter, *apropos* of the Prince of Wales?"

"No, never."

"Well, it so happened that Mrs. de Snobyn met Mrs. Grasscutter at some entertainment and snubbed her unmercifully, so much so that the little beauty resented it sharply, and expressed her opinion quite warmly on the subject. When the Prince of Wales was in Paris last winter, Mrs. de Snobyn gave him a grand dinner, and, according to etiquette, she asked him if there was any lady or gentleman that he would specially wish to have invited. Imagine her anguish, my dear, when he

named Mrs. Grasscutter! She had to sit down and write the prettiest of half-apologetic notes to that lady (which Mrs. Grasscutter showed in triumph to every one of her friends) inviting her to be present at the dinner, and hoping that the acquaintance so begun would speedily ripen into friendship. What strange tricks Fate does play sometimes with the self-respect of those who put their social trust in Princes! But to go back to the subject of our titled Americans, why cannot our country-people in general imitate the spirited good sense of Mrs. Bryan's reply to the Pope's offer through his nuncio of the title of Marchesa? 'I thank His Holiness,' was her answer, 'but I am Mrs. John Bryan and an American citizen,—those are titles enough for me.'"

"Simply because Mrs. Bryan is what the French call a *nature d'élite*,—one of the choice productions of Providence. You do not meet with many like her in this wicked world."

"It would be a much better and happier world if we did. And the American colony would be a far more interesting division of humanity if its inhabitants could all speak French and Spanish to perfection as she can, instead of indulging in a wild jargon that is neither French nor English, as some of them do. Did I not hear old Mrs. Chadhooke say to her coachman the other day, 'Sonnirez et puis revenerez et ouvrirez'? Which, being translated into Christian language, means, 'Ring and then come back and open the door.' And did not Mr. Selfridge on passing the large hat-store called

L'Entrepôt des Chapeaux on the Chaussée d'Antin the other day, remark with glee, 'Now I know what the French for hat is,—it is Enterpot'?"

"But he had only been in France a few weeks, dear Mrs. Harding."

"That is a fact, but why is not French taught in some decent and practical manner at home, I should like to know? Every American of any real fortune or position hopes to come to Europe some day, so why do they not prepare themselves for their anticipated tour by studying the language? But the air is growing chill and the carriages are disappearing. We had better turn homeward, for the air from the lake is anything but healthful after sunset. You will not come home and dine with me? No? Then, François, to Madame Magne's."

"You must not think me censorious towards my own country-people, my dear," quoth Mrs. Harding, as the carriage rolled swiftly down the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne. "After all, it is the American colony that lends to Paris for us Americans its most subtle charm. We dwell among our own people, and let me tell you, with all the follies of the foolish among us, there is no people on earth superior to us in certain essential respects; ay, or equal to us even in the highest qualities of human nature. And what makes me so very cross with some of our compatriots abroad is, that they persist in denying the fact and in striving to be anything in the world but what they were born to be, namely, American citizens. I do not mean that they ought to go around waving metaphorical star-spangled

banners, or living a sort of embodied Fourth of July oration. But surely, instead of straining every nerve to become bogus French, or bogus English, or bogus nobility, they might be proud of simply remaining Americans. In the old days of the Roman domination, a Roman citizen considered that title as the proudest upon the earth. And so ought the citizens of the United States to-day."

"After all, my dear old friend," I answered, "the majority of them do so consider their birthright and their nationality. It is annoying to find any exceptions to this universal rule, I must confess, particularly among our own sex. For when we remember that very few Frenchmen ever really did or could respect a woman (and I quote the words of one of the most intelligent Frenchmen that I ever met), you would think that sheer gratitude towards the kindly and chivalrous protectors of womanhood and weakness in our native land would induce any American woman to prize the friendship and society of her compatriots beyond those of the French and English foplings that many of our society-women over here contrive to gather around them. But our sex is weak, and shiny boots, perfectly-fitting gloves, and a bow, deep as though the gentleman executing it had a hinge on the middle of his back, too often prove irresistible attractions. Let us be consoled, however. As I said before, we have the majority on our side. America has captured for her own some of the finest brains and noblest hearts that ever owned existence to the Old World,—she can surely ungrudgingly permit Europe to take

possession of some of the weakest and most worthless of her own productions. The finer growths, such as Mrs. Bryan and Mrs. Upton, do not change their nature with the soil. In Paris they are still truly and nobly American. Potatoes vary in quality and flavor with the earth in which they are planted and the skies beneath which they grow, but the diamond remains unaltered and unalterable, whether washed by the waters of an African river or blazing on the bosom of a Northern queen."

CHAPTER VI.

URSULA.

I THINK that the intense interest excited in my mind by the proposed arrival of the Vanes is now fully explained. Was it not one of those vague presentiments that sometimes haunt the mind, telling in half-incomprehensible terms of some coming good or evil? For my life has gained a new brightness since the third floor front was definitely occupied by Mrs. Clyde and her granddaughter. As to Mr. Vane himself, he is seldom seen. He breakfasts early, and as he spends all his days at his studio and all his evenings at his club, and is very frequently invited out to dinner, the inmates of the Magne *pension* see but little of him. He is by no means a domestic man or a pattern of paternal tenderness. Indeed, he is reported to have said

that he broke up housekeeping expressly to free himself more fully from family ties. Now, with his studio apart from his dwelling, he need never see his mother-in-law or his daughter twice a week unless he is so inclined. And he does not often appear to be smitten with such a desire.

Why he should want to keep his daughter out of the way I cannot imagine. As to Mrs. Clyde, the case is different. She is old, and she is far from being either intellectual or sensible. In plain language, she is an old fool. Now, a young creature of that species is bad enough. But at all events a certain amount of folly is pardonable in extreme youth. It belongs to the age. The human animal must have its silly little ways and senseless foibles, as the kittens have freaks of running after their tails, and colts of rolling on their backs and kicking up their heels at nothing in particular. But age should be wise, or at least staid and sensible. And Mrs. Clyde is nothing of the sort. She was born a beauty, and she was once an accomplished leader of society. There are legends of her triumphs still extant in the annals of Newport and the White Sulphur Springs. Buchanan Read once painted her portrait in the character of the White Lady of Avenel. She figured as Medora at one of the grand fancy balls at Saratoga in the bygone years when there used to be fancy balls given at that classic resort. She was a constant guest at the White House during the administration of President Polk, and was the intimate and favorite friend of that President's accomplished wife. There are extant two lines of

verse addressed by Henry Clay to "the beautiful Mrs. Clyde," in which she is described as an embodied foam wreath. She was very lovely in her day I have been told, and she has been described to me as having been a vaporous, fragile-looking blonde, with a wealth of golden hair and a transparent, rose-tinged complexion. The gold and the roses are all gone now, and yet she has gotten so used to being a beauty and a woman of the world that she cannot resign herself to the necessities of the situation. She comes sailing down to dinner with a train some three yards long, in the cheapest and gayest of material, dragging behind her, mincing gracefully along on her high-heeled shoes and assuming the stately bearing of a peeress attending a Royal drawing-room at Buckingham Palace, a feat which, as she is small and slight, is rather difficult of accomplishment. Her poor little baked-apple face looks out from under the shelter of a well-frizzed front of bright yellow hair, which front is apparently kept in place by a jaunty little turban-hat trimmed with velvet and feathers. In fact, I think that she sleeps in that hat, for she is never seen without it. She does not frequent the public drawing-room much, but she delights in getting around her a few congenial souls, the Welfords and some few others, for instance, to whom she can discourse respecting the bygone glories of Saratoga and Newport, and the "high-toned society" that used to frequent the White House before the war. During the day she is invisible, as she always breakfasts in her own room. She is a homœopathist, and is always fancy-

ing that she is afflicted with some dire disease and shutting herself up to doctor herself on account of it. Thus, since she arrived here, she has already been the victim of dropsy, consumption, and incipient paralysis, and yet she is as healthy an old lady as one could find in a summer's day anywhere.

One thing about her is extremely comical: she persists in ignoring the limited pecuniary resources of the family, and talks in the most grandiose manner respecting their future intentions. "I have decided to leave my present dressmaker," she announced yesterday, with a wave of her hand; "she fails utterly to give me satisfaction. I shall order my fall visiting-dress of Worth; a sapphire-blue velvet trimmed with silver fox." Poor old lady! she neither goes out nor receives visits, except the very informal call of some old acquaintance. "Ursula, my love, I am not at all satisfied with your last new hat. It is not in the least stylish. Let me beg of you to throw it aside and order a new one of Virot. For blended simplicity and taste there is no one like her." Or else, "I cannot see why your father chose to engage rooms at Madame Magne's. *I* should infinitely have preferred to have taken a first floor at Miss Manners's house, or a furnished *entresol* on the Boulevard Malesherbes. But men are so obstinate,—they never will listen to reason." And yet she knows, and we know, and she knows that we know, that Mr. Vane's income is anything but extensive, particularly since Bonnot came so much into vogue as a portrait-painter.

But Ursula? what of *her?* I lay down my pen and look towards the window, where I behold a fairer, sweeter adornment to my shabby room than any stately lily or perfumed rose could be.

How is it that Stephen Vane can scorn, and thrust aside, and put so utterly from out his life this gracious, lovely girl? Had she been a pretty fool, or a strong-minded specimen of raw-boned ugliness, I could have understood it. But this poor child, refined and intelligent as she is fair,—one would imagine that even his coldly selfish nature would find some element of pride or pleasure in the possession of so rare a specimen of the human race, to say nothing of the natural affection wherewith a father is supposed to regard his offspring. Yet he seems to have a positive distaste for her society. I never see him speak to her if he can avoid it, and when he does say something to her, it is usually some phrase of sarcastic comment upon her dress or her appearance, or some word of reproof for a purchase or an action that has met with his disapprobation. Ah, had heaven granted to me the joys of wifehood and maternity, how happy I should have been in the possession of such a daughter!

Let me try to sketch her portrait as she sits beside the window, absorbed in the first pages of a newly-arrived magazine. For my parlor is hers to enter when she likes, only if she finds me writing, it is an understood thing that she is not to speak to me, and she obeys my behest with the punctiliousness of a conscientious child. Only as I bend above my paper, sometimes a furtive kiss touches my cheek,

and the shadow of a dark tress of falling hair sweeps across my paper, and I know that my darling has come noiselessly in to take refuge with me from her grandmother's medicaments and Lily Walker's proffered friendship. There she sits, slender, graceful, and high-bred looking, from the silken braid that crowns the small, well-shaped head down to the tip of her dainty shoes. She does not resemble her mother, if one may trust a very charming head of the late Mrs. Vane, painted by her husband about a year before her death, and now forming one of Ursula's most treasured possessions. In fact, she reminds me, in a softened and feminine way, of that very unpleasant old gentleman, her paternal grandfather. She has the large blue-gray eyes, the aristocratic carriage, the long, shapely hands and feet of the Vanes, and also too, if I may judge aright, in an acquaintance of a few weeks' duration only, something of their persistent tenacity of purpose. Her head is beautiful in shape and in poise, the graceful neck and the sloping lines of her shoulders resembling much the same peculiarities in the earlier portraits of the Empress Eugenie. She is essentially what one calls stylish, for want of a better word to express the subtle charm conveyed by blended grace and distinction. Were she to be attired in a tow-cloth bag, she would contrive to give to that coarse and shapeless garb a nameless air of elegance. As she glides into the dining-room one is inclined to consider her as too fashionably dressed for a boarding-house dinner, and on investigation her toilette resolves itself into her last year's

cashmere, with a bow of ribbon at the throat and a fresh flower or two in her corsage. In fact, she has no chance to be overdressed even did not her native good taste interfere to prevent it. One may trust to Stephen Vane's selfishness for that, no less than his limited income. His own clothes are always of the freshest, and are made by the most expensive tailors of Paris, while his beautiful daughter must get along as best she can with whatever she can discover amid the bargains in ready-made dresses on the selling-off days at the Bon Marché. Fortunately she has a friend at that mammoth establishment, in the shape of a wizened old clerk who once lived for a few years in New York, and who has brought back from the United States a decided weakness for Americans. I fancy that he must have been well treated there, poor old soul. So whenever any tremendous bargain is about to be thrown upon the counters, Ursula usually gets a note in a cramped almost illegible hand, beginning, "Ma chère Mees," and begging her to repair forthwith to such and such a department, there to behold certain articles that are to be sold far below their cost.

But with all M. Valther's kindness, and her own consummate grace and elegance, poor Ursula's wardrobe is of the slenderest. I wonder if the grave philosophizers over the minor miseries of this world ever realize what it is to any woman, and especially to any young girl, to find herself always shabbily and inappropriately dressed? I realize to my heart's core the feeling that makes Ursula regretfully yet firmly decline Mrs. Bryan's invitations to

the Opera, or Mrs. Upton's proffer of a seat in her carriage for the Grand Prix. "I have not anything, —*anything* that I can wear," she said in a passionate outburst of feeling to me one day when I was coaxing her not to persist in her denial. "I have a decent black stuff gown, it is true; but I have no intention of going out to dinner, or to the opera to sit in a grand box, in a black stuff gown; and I have nothing else. Yes, you may call it pride or foolishness if you will, but I *cannot* do it. Only do not suppose that I envy Blanche Upton her lovely dresses and flowers, and all the freshness and prettiness of every detail of her toilette. It is not that, —it is not envy. If I had any kind of a dress that was appropriate I would not care. My dear old grandmother would like to get me up in Madge Wildfire finery,—robe-dresses thirty years old, and faded feathers that came out of my mother's last bonnets. And my father would not trouble his head about me if he saw me promenading the boulevards wrapped in a blanket like an Indian squaw, if only there was no danger of people finding out that he was my father. No, no, dear Aunt Jane, I'll stay quietly at home with you,—that is the best thing for me to do." And she kissed me fondly, but I saw tears glistening in her great deep eyes as she turned away.

Ah, my darling, my darling! you are so young and so fair, why must all the innocent delights that Fate usually accords to youth and beauty be withheld from your grasp? I sometimes wonder which of us twain has suffered the most, I who have had

all and lost all, and you that have never known what it was to take one full draught from the cup of enjoyment that Pleasure offers so freely to youthful lips. In spite of the proneness of humanity to self-pity, I think that your pain has been the sharpest. For, at least, my youth knew golden, joy-crowned days, and now that the world lies gray and cold before me, I look upon it with the sober eyes of middle age.

And I can do nothing for her,—nothing! In the olden days how I should have enjoyed setting off her fresh young beauty for some gay festival! How I should like to see her loveliness, enhanced like a jewel in a faultless setting by the grace of elegant attire, that supple form with every flowing line set off by robes of silk and gauze, roses in those dark silken tresses, pearls upon that slender throat,—all the dainty decoration that seems to belong of right to beauteous girlhood! She seems to me, this child that I have learned to love so well in so brief a space of time, like another and a younger, brighter self. She "stands beside me like my youth," as dear to me as was Max Piccolomini to Wallenstein, and for the self-same reason. We old maids have sometimes these sudden outbreaks of the pent-up maternal feeling that is destined never to find its rightful outlet. Did not Queen Elizabeth adore children, and is it not on record how she kept the baby daughter of some noble lord with her for an entire day, often kissing her and caressing her, and "amending her attire with pins"? To me there was ever something deeply pathetic in this picture of the Virgin

Queen, clasping this baby to the breast that should never know a mother's perfect throb of bliss. Unlike Queen Bess, I love not children. They weary me and they exasperate me. But I do love—I always have loved—young girls and boys. Many a merry group have I gathered around me in the pleasant home, now scattered to the four winds of heaven. Many a "German" have I sat out, the guardian of the gayest girls that mingled in the dance, and enjoying it to the full as much as they. Many a young creature with more loveliness than wealth have I decked for a ball, a thousand-fold repaid for all my trouble by the gladsome beaming of the sunny face. But all that is over now, and for this sweet child who has crept closer to my heart than all the rest (perhaps because the pressure there of that dear head soothes the dull ache that gnaws within like the fox of the Spartan boy) I can do nothing. The remnants of my former splendors—the laces and India shawls, the corals and stone cameos that I still retain, merely because they are so utterly out of fashion as to be unsalable—are useless so far as she is concerned. I can hide the holes in my well-worn black silk by draping myself majestically in a cashmere or a shawl of Chantilly lace, but Ursula's gray alpaca is capable of no such embellishment.

Does this seem like a little grief? this question of clothes? To deem it so, one must never have known what it was to be young and pleasure-loving, and proud withal. Can she say, this child who longs for a glimpse of the gay world as a caged bird

does for the freedom of its wings and the sunny sky, to sweet, kindly Mrs. Bryan and genial Mrs. Upton that she cannot accept their proffered kindnesses for the lack of a muslin gown and a few yards of ribbon? And yet, such trifling needs suffice to shut this brilliant creature up in this stuffy boarding-house between poor old Mrs. Clyde and myself, with never a chance for an hour's amusement, save what she can find in my slender stock of books or among the periodicals and newspapers wherewith, thanks to my calling, I am well supplied. And worse still, she lives unorphaned yet worse than orphaned. It were better for her had she been fatherless than to have owned such a father as Stephen Vane. Not that he is ever actively unkind or cruel to her. He is too much of a gentleman to stoop to such conduct. He simply ignores her. She is a matter of perfect indifference to him. It annoys him to have to subtract from his income the requisite amount to pay for her necessary food and clothes. Otherwise he contrives, by putting her to one side and as much out of his life as possible, to get along almost as well as if he had no daughter at all. If he has any active feeling respecting her, I think that he dislikes her. She is an unwelcome element that has been obtruded by destiny into his life, and which cannot conveniently be gotten rid of. As to making any small sacrifices for her pleasure or welfare, such as doing without his club subscription, his cigars, or his fine Bordeaux, to purchase her a pleasure or increase her comforts, such an idea never seems to have crossed his brain. And

if anybody suggested such a thing they would certainly get cruelly snubbed for their pains. He seems to regard her as an incumbrance left on his hands by an unlucky speculation on his part, which promised well at first and ended in utter disappointment (namely, his second marriage), and he regards her with no favorable eye in consequence.

Perhaps it is but an old maid's idea, but I have always had a firm conviction in my own mind that parents owed more, or at least as much duty to their children, as children do to their parents. We hear continually of the gray hairs that have been brought in sorrow to the grave by undutiful sons and recalcitrant daughters, but who shall count for us the bright young heads that have been bowed to the very dust by cruel, ignorant, or unwise parents? Who shall record for us the blighted hopes, the wrecked aspirations, the gay young spirits crushed to the very earth by narrow-minded prejudice or unjust tyranny? And the child cannot escape from the home despotism that is torturing him. He is fast in the web, and only some wild and desperate struggle, such as society can hardly pardon, can rend the meshes asunder. And, in truth, what do parents bestow upon their children that they should thereafter be authorized to rule them with a rod of iron? Life, do you say? Ah me, which one of us on reaching middle age is willing to name that as a priceless boon? Are there many of us to whose lips has never risen the bitter cry wrung from us by sore extremity of anguish, It were better for us had we never been born! What

does life mean for us after all? Only a certainty of misery here and a chance of damnation hereafter. At least so say the orthodox,—and I suppose they know.

And then there is a period in every child's life when the parent almost certainly holds the golden gift of happiness in his or her hands. Especially is this true of a girl. A rose, a ribbon, a dance, a new dress,—there is a time in girlish lives when these mean bliss and their withholding misery. A boy can generally get away into some kind of life out-of-doors, and well is it for the father and the mother that make home wretched for him (often with the very best intentions and the purest motives) if he does not find out Sin in his search for the forbidden Pleasure. But a young girl's joys are limited to the social sphere. If she be quiet, studious, unattractive, she may make interests for herself outside of the usual amusements of her age. But a bright young creature, just entering into womanhood, with the quicksilver of youth running in her veins, and all her being thirsting for pleasure and movement and life, as a flower-cup does for the sun and the dew, to trammel her and crush out her joyous instincts is to deprive the spring-time of her life of all its radiance. My poor Ursula,—my poor George! Dutiful children are ye both, and but little recompensed by fate. For Ursula, she loses little save the savor of her youth and the lustre of these early days of her life that ought to show so cloudless. But George's blighted career stands ever before me as a monument of what a parent may do towards

wrecking the existence of a loving and probably a beloved child. That perfect gentleman and accomplished artist, Stephen Vane,—that conscientious Christian yet narrow-minded and prejudiced lady, Mrs. Mary Brandon,—have each left the stamp of sorrow on the young lives committed by Providence to their keeping. Truly, both of these young creatures might echo that dreary line in Lamartine's Meditations,—

"Qu'avons-nous fait au ciel pour mériter de naître?"

As I reach this point in my musings Ursula looks up, and seeing the pen hanging idle in my listless hand, she glides softly towards me with the noiseless, undulating step that is one of her great charms, and, throwing aside her book, she takes her seat on a low stool beside me and lays her head upon my knee. I rest my hand fondly on the dark silken braids, and we are both silent for a space.

"Aunt Jane," says Ursula suddenly, after a while (I have prescribed this form of address both to George and herself, Miss Anson sounding far too formal), "were you very happy when you were a young girl?"

The words of Mrs. Browning rose to my lips:

"They look up in our faces,
And ask us 'Was it thus and thus
When we were in their places?'
We cannot speak—we see anew
The hills we used to live in,
And feel our mother's smile press through
The kisses she is giving."

But I answer after a brief pause, "Very happy, dear child. But why do you ask?"

She continues musingly, as if following out her own train of thought,—

"I wonder if I shall ever know what it is to be very happy?"

Sad words are these from lips so young and sweet. I bend to kiss her before I reply.

"Why not, Ursula? Dear, you are young; the future lies fair before you with all its possibilities. Unlike Thekla, you have never yet 'gelebt und geliebet.' The days of your living and loving are yet to come. Child, if I were but eighteen, do you not think that I would carry my load of care as lightly as may be? There is so much to hope for in the chances and changes of existence when it counts so few years in the past, sad as that past may be. Were you as old as I am, little one, you might perhaps despair of ever knowing brighter days. Hope and be cheerful, for you have yet Fate's best gift within your grasp,—you are young!"

She listens unconvinced. Youth is impatient, —with all its confidence in the future's guerdons, it craves some foretaste of them in the present. And the bitter musings of her heart find utterance in one piteous plaint, "If only there were some one to love me,—if only my mother were alive!"

She hides her face in the folds of my dress and suffers her tears to stream uncontrolled. I smooth her soft tresses and I am silent. There are griefs beyond the reach of consoling words. Presently,

her brief emotion exhausted by its very vehemence, she looks again up into my face.

"Dear Aunt Jane, do you know what manner of life I have always led? I have never had any one to care for me really—never—except my poor old grandmother, and she would rather potter over her medicine-chest or her old dresses for a week than trouble her head for an hour about me. When I went to school I was put into a class with the other American girls. I heard them talk about their fathers and their mothers; they had visitors, boxes, presents. None ever came for me,—not even a remembrance at Christmas or on my birthday,—a pencil drawing or a two-franc toy, anything just to show me that I was not forgotten. I used to be proud of my handsome, aristocratic-looking father. I would have loved him—oh, so dearly!—if he would have let me. But he showed me very speedily that, when I came home for the holidays, I was to keep out of his way as much as possible. If I ventured into the studio, which I only dared to do when he was absent, I ran the risk of a sharp reprimand if he came home and found me there. He never spoke to me if he could help it,—he never caressed me or even looked tenderly at me in all my life."

"Ursula, your father is naturally a selfish man, and——"

"Yes, I know," she interrupted me quickly, "but even selfish people can love their children after some fashion,—a maimed and imperfect way it may be, but still the love is there. Look at Mrs. Welford,—

she is as selfish as she can be, but she pets Minnie, and is fond of her for all that. She would not give up a dress, or a ribbon, or a pleasure for Minnie's sake,—that I know,—but as soon as she has everything that she wants, she is glad to do anything to get matters arranged for her daughter's welfare or satisfaction. But as for me,—Aunt Jane, I sometimes think my father would be glad if I were to die! I know he would not care."

"Ursula,—Ursula!"

"Just listen. While I was at school—it was the last year that I spent there—I was taken very ill with inflammation of the lungs. The stupid French doctor who was called in said I had nothing the matter with me but a bad cold, and dosed me with *tisanes* till I was on the verge of the grave. When I was at the worst, Mrs. Carlton, an old friend of my mother's, called to see me. She found me so ill that she thought I was dying. She sent off immediately for her own physician, Dr. Warner, who came at once and said that I was in imminent danger. So she sat down and wrote a note to my father. She drove home by his studio, intending to leave the note on his easel should he chance to be out, but she found him there and told him the whole story. I know she said that she thought I could not live through the night. That evening she went to a ball at the Russian Embassy. In passing through the crowded reception-rooms she came face to face with my father. She uttered some exclamation of surprise at seeing him there after the tidings she had brought him. 'Hush!' he whispered,

playfully, holding up his finger, 'I did not get your note—till to-morrow morning.'"

I listen and am silent. The usual commonplaces fail me in the face of such an incident. Dickens has said, in "Dombey and Son," that there is no orphan so desolate as a child that is an outcast from a living parent's love. But what if the parent has no love to bestow? What if, instead of a heart closed against the unhappy offspring, there is no heart in the case at all? That is a state of affairs unforeseen by the great sentimentalist.

"I suppose," continues Ursula, "that our good clergyman would tell me that I ought to obey the command to honor my father under any circumstances. But, oh! Aunt Jane, I have no father. There is a man in this world who has laid upon me the sore burden of existence. But as to love, and care, and parental tenderness, or even ordinary parental feeling, I have never known even their semblance or their shadow."

She rises and stands before me, erect and strong in the beauty and vigor of her youth, but with all a woman's serious thoughtfulness in the fair face where the bloom of childhood yet lingers in unfaded freshness.

"Dear friend, I have done with repining and with dreams. I mean to work out my own destiny. There is surely something to be done in this world, some career that I can follow, some gift of mine that I can turn to account. I will not drift supinely through life, a pensioner on my father's unwilling bounty now, a poor struggler, starving on a beg-

garly pittance hereafter. There is something that I mean to do, and you shall help me to do it."

"And that something is——"

"To go upon the stage!"

Another swift, light kiss and she is gone, fearing, perhaps, to face my possible objections to this wild and suddenly divulged project. I turn to my desk with a sigh, and my work lies unfinished before me, while my mind drifts away in dreary musings on the future of the two young creatures that I love so dearly. For your sakes, O son and daughter of my barren years, have the empty chambers of my heart been swept and garnished! You dwell there in the innermost sanctuary, whose warmth and shelter are, alas! all the boons that I can bestow on you. Sad mystery of life that gives to these bright, young, gifted beings no better guerdon of affection than the love of a forlorn woman who has seen better days, unlinked to either by the ties of blood.

CHAPTER VII.

CASTLES IN THE AIR.

Go upon the stage!

Well, why not? At least, that is the question that I have repeatedly asked of myself on my haunted nights, when, stung into wakefulness by some persistent memory whose past sweetness has turned to bitterness upon my lips, I pace my bedroom, wrapped in a loose gown, and watch the pale glimmer of the dawn as it contends with the last rays of my dying lamp. What other course can I suggest to the spirited girl who has firmly resolved to shape out for herself a career apart from the petty miseries of penury and dependence? So far as I can see, she will be forced hereafter to earn her daily bread. The greater part of Mr. Vane's income dies with him. Mrs. Clyde enjoys a small annuity, which just boards and dresses her and pays for her pills and powders, and that, too, becomes extinct with her life. Relatives, my poor Ursula has none, and it is as well. Wealth has plenty of fond cousins and tender aunts, but so soon as poverty comes in at the window one's relations rush out at the door. So she must e'en prepare to make her own living,—but how? She cannot teach; she has none of the natural liking for children or the inborn patience that are necessary qualifications for

a governess to possess. She cannot sew, and that way, too, starvation lies. She has some talent with her pen, and can dash off a playful letter or a spirited translation; but she lacks the imaginative gifts that could alone make the writings of so young and inexperienced an authoress either popular or marketable. There have been gifted girls who took to writing as Fanny Kemble did to acting, and succeeded as she did by the sheer force of inborn genius. But of that genius not even my partial eyes can discern a vestige in my darling's few literary efforts. She might train herself for choir or concert singing did she but possess a voice, but that crowning requisite for vocal successes is unfortunately lacking. Yet her voice in speaking is singularly fine, its tones being full, round, and sweet, and capable of infinite varieties of inflection and modulation.

Here, then, is one important qualification for a dramatic career. And she possesses others,—beauty, grace, perfect health, and above all refinement. For even on the Parisian boards there is no type so rarely to be found as a high-bred lady. Ursula's supreme elegance and distinction would serve her well. And then, moreover, I think (and old dramatic critic that I now am, I consider myself no incompetent judge)—nay, I am sure that she has a positive talent for acting, quite apart from her passionate love for the drama and for all matters theatrical. Yet it is talent only,—it is not genius. The inborn power that enables George Brandon, untaught in the art though he be, to put off his own individuality as he might a glove, and to assume that of any char-

acter that he wishes to represent, is lacking in her case. The sharp-cut stamp of Nature's intent and purpose which we call genius, and which marks a man or a woman out for some special career with Destiny's ineffaceable imprint, has not been set upon her intellect. She may become a Mrs. Kendal or a Mrs. Hoey, but never a Ristori or a Rachel. As to the temptations of a theatrical career, they would form no temptations to her. Neither sensuality nor weakness are among the recognizable defects of her character. And we have abundant instances on our own stage of women who have passed triumphantly through the fiercest furnace flames of a theatrical ordeal, and have come forth without so much as the smell of the fire upon their garments. I would not wrong you, my white and stately lily, by imagining that your stainless cup could ever become a chalice for the unclean waters of feminine impurity. Your proud, pure nature would cast off even the soil of surrounding uncleanness as the snowy feathers of the swans in the Bois de Boulogne shed every drop of the unwholesome waters of its stagnant lake.

But—and therein lies the rub—how would she, delicate and refined as she is, ever tolerate the inevitable contact with the personality of the stage? She, in her instinctive recoil from whatever is coarse and unrefined, has already given dire offence to more than one of our fellow-boarders. Good Mrs. Hoxton's love for young onions stewed in cream and butter (a dish that Madame Magne causes to be prepared particularly for her delec-

tation), and Lily Walker's painted face and fast manners, have caused her to repel sundry well-meant attempts at intimacy on the part of those personages. She shares, therefore, with me the odium of being considered "stuck up." As for the touch of a masculine hand, she recoils from it with instinctive and inbred repulsion. How would she endure the stage embrace of a theatrical lover—an Orlando or a Romeo—who had dined off of similar viands to those affected by Mrs. Hoxton, and whose unwashed hands would leave traces of their contact on Juliet's white satin robe or Rosalind's gray doublet? How could she stoop to court the good offices of some fair-faced rival who had won her way to the manager's good graces by the shortest and most shameless of paths? And such contact and such association would perforce have to be endured. No lady-like shrinking would be tolerated on the part of the novice,—the aspirant for theatrical honors. Even were such repulsion merely indicated, her associates, if roused to indignation, could easily punish her by the simple process of causing her to miss the best points in her parts and by marring her most effective scenes. My snowy dove! I cannot fancy her as trooping with crows and being happy in such association.

And yet, have I the right to dissuade her from pursuing her chosen path, when I have not the power of pointing out to her any more feasible road? I hold that when the earning of one's daily bread is in question, no one has any right to interfere with the ways and means that are chosen, if

only those ways and means be right and lawful in themselves. Officious friends and anxious relatives generally delight in meddling with and marring a projected course of action if adverse to their principles or their prejudices, but without saying to the thwarted struggler, Come, we disapprove of your making your living in such or such a manner, —it will bring discredit upon us,—so we will e'en support you ourselves. And yet such a declaration is the only one that would render such interference justifiable. A man or a woman, and above all the latter, cast suddenly on the world to shift for herself or himself, must do the best that they can. It is hard enough work to shape out an independence without the work being thwarted by well-meant but empty opposition. So, as I am unable to point out to Ursula any possible means of gaining her daily bread hereafter, apart from the career that she has chosen, I shall simply stifle my many fears and misgivings and aid her to the best of my ability.

George Brandon is deeply interested in Ursula's projects. The young people often meet of an evening in my little parlor, and pass an hour or two very pleasantly over George's sketches. Sometimes George reads to us while we work, at others he delights us both with some of those impassioned Shakspearian recitations, wherein he puts so much of that inner self that is destined to wither away without ever blossoming forth into the full bloom of Art. But George has greatly changed of late. The listlessness that has led him to accept all the trials of life with a sort of patient indifference has

vanished. He no longer finds contentment in living from hand to mouth, in subsisting for weeks on the price of a sketch or a fan-painting, or in making long visits to his artist friends at Grez or at Barbison, spending the days in sketching or in dreaming beneath the trees. He, too, is full of plans for shaping out for himself a career. He has sent a series of spirited little drawings of Parisian scenes and characters to one of the best known of the English illustrated papers. He has completed a set of illustrations for a story of French life that Roland Cheswick has just finished, with intent to offer it to "Scribner's Magazine." He has half a dozen ideas for fans laid out. And above all, he is at work on a Shakspeare Alphabet, which one of his friends, an English inventor now busied in Paris about matters connected with the taking out of his patent in France, has offered to take to London, there to be submitted to some one of the great publishers of children's holiday-books. The idea is a very beautiful one, and the drawings are finely executed in water-color, each letter being represented by some one of Shakspeare's characters. Thus A is represented by Ariel leading Trinculo and Stephano on their mad dance over bush and brier. B is Beatrice, a lovely laughing face peering out of a garland-like growth of "pleached honeysuckles." C is Caliban, a quaint shape, half bestial and half human. D, Desdemona, a fair sleeping figure, half revealed beneath loosened draperies of misty lace. J is of course Juliet, and for her Ursula has consented to pose, with her dark hair braided with pearls and

her slender form imprisoned in an antique bodice of white satin, which George has disinterred from among some of his artistic stores. He has chosen to portray the scene of the drinking of the potion, and very high-hearted and resolved does Ursula look as she stands with my antique goblet of Venetian glass in her uplifted hand. The likeness will be an admirable one, and I decidedly grudge the sacrifice of so fine and spirited a design to the exigencies of the engraver and colorist, who will shape from it only a showy picture fit to please a child, while in its present condition it is really worthy of a place in the portfolio or the gallery of an art-connoisseur. Then, too, George has betaken himself to literature as well as to painting. But I fear me that he has selected a path that will never lead him to fame or to fortune. For, with the genuine audacity of youth that dares all difficulties because it comprehends none of them, he has undertaken to write a tragedy,—a historical tragedy—a tragedy in blank verse,—which Ursula is to bring out as soon as she has made her mark in the theatrical profession, and which has been, indeed, composed expressly for her!

I think that one of the chief compensations to be found in the toils and trials, the keen disappointments, the petty and corroding miseries of a literary or an artistic life, lies in the proneness of those who follow either career to indulge in castles in the air. In their mind's eye, the painter and the writer behold such productions of the well-worn pencil or pen as never were and never can be.

They plan glorious works and dream them not in their full magnificence. They have the keen delight of creation, the joys of anticipation, the pleasant foretaste of a shadowy yet assured success. They live in a divine realm, peopled by the airy children of their brains. Ah me, the books that never were written, the pictures that never were painted,—they surpass in glory the rarest of the actual productions of genius. Hawthorne's visioned Virtuoso possessed a gallery surpassing that of the Louvre, a library nobler than the National Library or that of the British Museum. Who can doubt but that at some time or another Shakspeare planned out a grander tragedy than *Lear*, a comedy more exquisite than *Twelfth Night?* Which of us would not gladly exchange one half of our treasured volumes for the conclusion of Macaulay's "History of England," Thackeray's "History of the Reign of Queen Anne," Hawthorne's "Dolliver Romance," and Motley's "History of the Thirty Years' War"? Holmes has truly written,—

> "Our whitest pearl we never find;
> Our ripest fruit we never reach,
> The flowering moments of the mind
> Drop half their petals in our speech."

Among the "fair buds of song that never blow" of which our gentle poet-humorist writes, the tragedy on which my dear George is now at work will doubtless be numbered. A tragedy,—does any young aspirant for literary distinction who dashes boldly into the mysteries of Act V., Scene VII., actually

realize what it means to write a successful tragedy? It means to succeed where Tennyson and Swinburne have failed, and where even here in France, the land of dramatists *par excellence*, but few obtain even a partial hearing. It means to unite to poetic talent of a high order a practical knowledge of matters and things theatrical, and also that mysterious quality which the French term *le don du théâtre*, and for which we have no name in English, probably because we lack the quality itself. Nor can I think that George has been happy in his choice of a subject. He has selected Lady Jane Grey for a heroine, and that sweet historical saint is too far removed from the feelings and passions of earth to make her a good dramatic heroine. It would require the genius of a Schiller, not only to deal aright with that spotless central figure, but also to depict the whirl and clash of the contending factions, whose fiercest passions flashed forth into action after the death of Edward VI. He, and he alone of modern authors, could have fixed upon the page of the poetic drama the contemptible image of the weak Duchess Frances, who tyrannized over her fair young daughter with cruel deeds and crueller words, and in after-days continued to serve in the household of the remorseless queen who had deprived her of her child,—and such a child! He alone, or genius equal to his own, could bring before us the world of action crowded into the brief, troubled epoch, when the innocent victim to the ambition of others passed through her short-lived summer royalty to martyrdom and rest.

However, I do not feel myself called upon to blight George's hopes or to discourage his efforts. The fervor and excitement of composition lend a new interest to days that would else be dreary enough I fear. So I forbear from pointing out to him the difficulties of his self-appointed task. I have not even demonstrated to him that the effect in his work on which he chiefly plumes himself, namely, the contrast between the lofty intellectuality, the calm, pure, noble character of the Lady Jane, and the boyish impetuosity of her youthful husband, Lord Guilford Dudley, has already been portrayed by Schiller in his *Wallenstein*, and that Jane and her spouse are but pale copies of "Thekla" and "Max Piccolomini." Nor do I expatiate to him on the very small chance of success that his play would enjoy in our native land, where anything serious on the stage is held in marked reprobation; where the imported attractions from France are not *Hernani* or *Jean Dacier*, but *Pink Dominos* and *Baby*, where Booth draws less than Lotta, and where negro minstrelsy is five times as popular as the Italian opera. On the contrary, I have done my best to aid him by my criticisms and my suggestions; but as I know far better how a thing ought to be done than the way to do it, I fear that my counsels will only be valuable in so far as they have shown him what dangers to avoid. I have already prevented him from crowding some twenty scenes in a single act, each containing one or two personages and one speech or dialogue. I have also impressed upon his mind the observance of certain simple and ne-

cessary precautions too much neglected by youthful dramatists, namely, due provision for the exits of the personages and the changing of the scenes. Also I have demonstrated to him the necessity of having what are technically called "carpenter scenes," to allow of the arrangement of the important "sets" of each act without having waits of a preposterous length between the acts. In fine, I have tried to teach him the mechanism of his art, a lesson as necessary for the dramatist to learn as for the painter. He chafes a little against all these restraints with the natural impatience and impetuosity of a youthful poet, but he always ends by submitting half-laughingly to my critical dictum.

Meantime, my children are as happy as veritable children over the work. They study and recite by the hour at a time, and meet in my little parlor to go over certain scenes together, for of course George has written all the interviews between Lady Jane and Guilford Dudley even before fully planning out his plot. I cannot help a secret misgiving that those scenes are all that he will ever finish. But he and Ursula already in their mind's eye behold Lady Jane Grey installed in full pomp of representation on the stage of Booth's Theatre. They have talked over the scenery and the costumes a dozen of times at the very least. George is to make a special pilgrimage to London as soon as he can afford it (alas! my poor boy, when will that be?) to make a sketch of the cell in the Tower wherein Lady Jane was imprisoned, and of the spot within the Tower walls where she was beheaded. Also he

is to bring back photographs of all the known and authentic portraits of his gentle heroine to serve as models for Ursula's costumes. I have especially recommended to his notice the portrait in the Kensington Museum, wherein the Lady Jane is represented as wearing a very gorgeous robe of crimson velvet embroidered with gold, a dress that could not fail to be effective on the stage.

It must be confessed that the fragments of the drama wherewith I have become familiar are not lacking in poetic fervor, faulty though the finished work will probably be in construction and in detail. I will transcribe here a passage or two that have particularly struck me, especially one speech which Ursula has repeated to me so often that it remains indelibly imprinted in my memory. It will be seen that George, with pardonable poetic license, has somewhat violated the truth of history by making Lady Jane in love with her miserable nonentity of a husband, who was far her inferior in intellect as in age, and on whom she was bestowed merely to carry out the interwoven plots of the confederated nobles. This speech our dramatist has put into the mouth of Lady Jane in answer to the expression of her husband's desire to share her regal dignity.

"Dear, my lord,
I pray thee, trust me. Ask no more this boon.
Deem not the sudden splendors of the crown
Have blighted all my wifely tenderness,
And set beside thee, not a loving spouse,
But an aspiring princess, who would clutch
All keys of empire in her feeble hands,

Denying thee all semblance of a share
In the new glories, that, like sunset beams,
Have fall'n athwart her life. Not so,—not so!
Be thou not blinded by the crimson light
That glows around us, for its rays are red,
Not with the throne's, but with the scaffold's dye!
Have I not looked in Mary's steel-cold eyes,
And read there neither love of kin nor mercy?
We, linked by Fate in holy marriage-bonds,
Must tread in parted paths else both are lost.
Let me go forth to meet my doom alone,
For I am surely doomed. Lay not on me
The anguish of beholding thee too perish!
The crown they set upon my brow is but
The mark like that wherewith the shepherd marks
The lamb he soon shall slay. Hold thou aloof,
And from the safe shore where the tempests rage
Unslaying, thou shall yet behold the bark,—
This painted bark of summer royalty,—
Where thou wouldst sit in pomp beside the helm,
Sink, wrecked and shattered, in the angry sea.
Lo, tis my love that speaks! Ah God,—how fair
Life might have passed amid the pleasant bowers,
Where there are flowers, and the hum of bees,
And songs of happy birds; and we too, we,
Locked hand in hand, heart linkéd unto heart,
Might there have loved and lived, and never known
The curse of queenship nor a queen's revenge!"

Nor is the address of Lord Guilford Dudley to his wife, after they have both been sentenced to death, wholly without merit:

"Think not I sorrow for thee, vanished throne,
Nor for the young life, that in every vein
Throbs forth a protest 'gainst the coming fate.
It is for thee I mourn, O dearest wife!
Queen amongst women more than e'er o'er England,
Tender, and chaste, and wise, and beautiful,

Have I then learned how exquisitely rare
Was the pure pearl, wherewith fond destiny
Had crowned my life, only to see it sink
In the red torrent of our common doom?
Our sun goes down at noontide, and the light
Tells us of golden hours that might have been—
That now shall never be—long, radiant days,
Love-lighted, lingering, serene—with thee,—
Thou fairest, sweetest, flow'r that ever bloomed
Upon the blended roses' royal stem,—
Mine own to wear upon my heart—to lend
Divinest perfume to mine every hour.
And now with life thus richly dow'red with bliss,
I lose thee, losing life. Once I misjudged
Thy lofty nature, and I deemed thee cold,
And proud, and churlish of thy new-won rank.
I know thee now for what thou truly art,
One of God's angels, and to lose thee now,
Thus known—thus loved,—oh, this is agony
Sharp as the axe and crueller than the rack!
Will all the joys of Heav'n repay this loss
Of happiness that might have been our own?
We are so young, and we so love each other!"

There is also a very charming soliloquy, wherein Lady Jane describes her studious hours with her tutor, Roger Ascham, but it is too long for transcription here, and is, moreover, somewhat undramatic. I have advised George to appropriate for his last act the fine dramatic effect of the scene in *La Fille de Roland*, wherein "Berthe" and "Charlemagne" watch "Gerald's" combat with the Saracen from the open window. I think that a very strong point might thus be made of the historic incident of the doomed princess, beholding from her window the corpse of her husband brought back from the place of execution that was to be her own destination

on the morrow. I never could exactly understand, by the way, why the execration of posterity should have followed Queen Elizabeth for her dooming to death of the guilty Queen of Scots, while Bloody Mary has been held comparatively blameless for the slaying of her sweet seventeen-year-old cousin, and that with such circumstances of peculiar atrocity as the one just mentioned. But, positively I am becoming as much absorbed in Lady Jane Grey as are George and Ursula themselves. This will not do, Miss Anson. It were highly unwise for you to devote your thoughts and time to the personages of the sixteenth century. A newspaper correspondent must not indulge in such vagaries. Your business is with the active, brilliant life of the Paris of the Third Republic, not with that of England in the reign of Mary Tudor.

I have found a great deal of amusement of late in accompanying Ursula to her dramatic lessons. For, as she confided to me the other day, she has been taking lessons for some two months past from M. Tellier, of the Odéon, an ex-laureate of the Conservatoire, and an elderly, intelligent, gentlemanly man, who seems to take a deep interest in the progress of his gifted young pupil. The funds for this enterprise were furnished by Mrs. Clyde, who at first accompanied her granddaughter, but as the intimacy between Ursula and myself waxed closer, she ventured to beg that I would go with her instead of the old lady, who was apt to start off into long discourses in very bad French, thus sadly interrupting the lessons, as the professor, in view

of her age and sex, always deemed it his duty to stop and listen to her with all possible respect and courtesy. So I usually take a novel or a magazine with me, sheltering my real interest in what is going on behind the unread pages of my book. I think that M. Tellier's instructions will be of the greatest benefit to Ursula, though, as a matter of course, all the passages that she declaims are in French. She cannot learn how to recite Shakspearian verse from him, or indeed any blank verse at all. The stately march of the rhymed Alexandrines will not, I fear, help her much in her studies of English tragedy. But he shows her all the minor details of the art; how to walk, to kneel, to sit down, how to fall at a monarch's feet in supplication, to look up at a window, to bow her head before a threatened blow, etc., etc. All these things Ursula performs with an immense degree of serious attention and earnestness. But to me it seems rather comical when the gestures and attitudes of the stage are gone through with in a small commonplace parlor by an elderly gentleman in a black frock-coat and gray trousers, and a young girl in a brown alpaca costume considerably the worse for wear. For instance, one of his favorite bits of practice is the repetition of the tragic moment in the third act of Racine's *Andromaque*, when "Pyrrhus" cries,—

> 'Allons aux Grecs livrer le fils d'Hector!"

And "Andromaque," rushing forward, throws herself at his feet, exclaiming,—

"Ah seigneur! arrêtez!—Que prétendez-vous faire?
Si vous livrez le fils, livrez-leur donc la mère!"

The number of times that Ursula-Andromaque has fallen on her knees before M. Tellier-Pyrrhus is incalculable, and must have bruised those members sorely I fancy. Then there are two lines from M. Lebrun's version of Schiller's *Mary Stuart* that she must have repeated with the appropriate gestures at least a hundred times:

"Si le ciel était juste, indigne souveraine!
Tu serais à mes pieds, car je suis votre reine."

At the words "le ciel," Ursula is told to point to heaven, and at those "mes pieds," she points to the ground with a haughty downward motion of the hand. And really my darling looks a very spirited and royal lady for the moment. Then, having decidedly wounded M. Tellier's feelings by objecting in a very positive way to learning any fragments from Racine or Corneille, she is studying the fine soliloquy of the Queen in *Ruy Blas*, though since she has heard Sarah Bernhardt declaim it she is in despair over the defects of her own diction. He is very severe with her, suffering not a line or a word to go unremarked or unchallenged.

The lesson proceeds something in the following fashion. Ursula as "Dona Maria de Neubourg" is seated in a large chair. M. Tellier reads the cue,—

"Come, let us leave the queen to her devotions."

Then Ursula slowly rises and begins,—

"To her devotions? Rather to her dreams!"

M. Tellier (*sotto voce*).—"A strong interrogative accent on devotions, if you please, Mademoiselle."

Ursula (continuing):

> "Whence fly them now? alone—all—all have left me,
> Poor spirit, wand'ring torchless in the dark——"

M. Tellier.—"Now pause. The queen muses over the events of the past."

Ursula:

> "That bloody hand imprinted on the wall,—
> Was he then wounded? God! but 'twas his fault!"

M. Tellier.—"Now three shades of expression are needed for that line; anxiety for the first division, terror for the one word that is to be exclaimed, and a tender blame for the last clause. Go on, Mademoiselle."

Ursula:

> "What madness bade him scale that lofty wall?
> To bring to me the flowers else denied me,
> For that—so small a thing—to dare so much!"

M. Tellier.—"Linger tenderly on the two first clauses of that line."

Ursula:

> "Doubtless 'twas on the lance-points he was wounded,
> A scrap of lace still hung there. Ah, one drop
> Of blood thus shed for me outweighs my tears!"

M. Tellier.—"More fervor in those last words—more conviction."

Ursula:

"Each time I wander there to seek those flowers,
I promise Heaven, that deserts me quite,
Ne'er to return, and ever I return.
But he? These three days past he comes no more.
Wounded! O young unknown, whoe'er thou art,
Who, seeing me alone and far away
From all who love me, and who, asking naught
And hoping naught, thus seek'st me, bearing all things.
Thou who dost shed thy blood and risk thy days
To give a flower to the Queen of Spain,
Whoe'er thou art, whose shadow follows me,
Since my heart yields to laws inexorable,
Be thine my blessing and thy mother's love!"

M. Tellier.—"Very good,—but put more pathos into your voice, Mademoiselle. Remember that the tone of the soliloquy changes here. Now,—your hand carried suddenly to your breast."

Ursula:

"His letter sears my heart. And he—the other—
Th' implacable Don Salluste. Destiny
Crushes me and protects me, for a demon
Follows behind me with my guardian angel;
I see them not, yet feel, amid the night,
They strive to lead me to some fearful moment.
The man who hates me near the man who loves me.
Will the last save me from the first? I know not.
Alas! my fate floats twixt opposing winds.
How poor a thing and powerless is a queen!"

M. Tellier.—"Those words must be uttered with extreme pathos—almost despairingly."

Ursula:

"To prayers then——"

(She kneels.)

"O aid me, Holy Virgin,
I dare not raise my eyes to thee!
O Heaven,
The lace, the flow'rs, the letter,—all are fire."

M. Tellier (approvingly).—"Very good—there was true force in your passion. You must start from your knees there, snatch the hidden treasures from their concealment in your corsage and throw them on the table. Very good,—a very graceful and appropriate gesture. Now kneel again."

Ursula:

"Star of the sea,—the martyr's hope,—oh, aid me!"

(Interrupting herself.)

"That letter—it is there—it draws me to it.
I will not read it more. O Queen of Heav'n,
Thou whom Christ gave as sister to all mourners,
Come to me, I implore thee!"

(Rising and going towards the table.)

"Once—once more
I'll read this letter,—then will I destroy it.
Alas! I've said that daily for a month!"

M. Tellier.—"Put more eagerness in the taking possession of the letter. That last line should be uttered in a tone of utter despondency."

Ursula (reads):

"Madam, beneath your feet, amid the shadows,
A man who loves you lurks, lost in the night,
A wretched earthworm that adores a star.
Who, for your sake, would give his very soul,
Who writhes below the while you shine above."

She lays the letter on the table.

> "When the soul thirsts it fain must quench its thirst,
> Even with poison."

She replaces the lace and the letter in her bosom.

> "I have naught on earth."

M. Tellier.—"Utter those words with a despairful pathos. Remember, she is a lovely, gentle, and most unhappy woman, this poor queen of Spain."

Ursula:

> "And yet, I must love some one in this world.
> Had he so willed it, I'd have loved the King."

M. Tellier.—"You put a wrong emphasis there,—the stress should not come on the word 'loved,' but on the word 'King.'"

Ursula:

> "He leaves me here alone deprived of love.
> A letter from the King? Saved,—saved!"

M. Tellier.—"Excellent! That cry of joy was very naturally uttered. Now if you please, Mademoiselle, we will go all over this soliloquy once more from the beginning."

And they do go over it again and once again, till I lose all sense of what is passing and drift off into dreamland, a journey from which I am speedily recalled by a light hand on my shoulder and a laughing voice in my ear, saying, "You poor, dear Aunt Jane,—are you then so tired? But wake up, for the lesson is over." And M. Tellier comes for-

ward, courteously ignoring my uncourteous slumbers, and chats with me pleasantly while Ursula puts on her hat and cloak, assuring me, with an accent of unmistakable sincerity, that "Mademoiselle has great dispositions for the stage."

Great dispositions,—by which phrase I suppose he means both talent and inclination. Yes, I believe him; the bent, the inward gift, is there, else would I have uttered to the earnest toiling girl such words of warning as would have caused her to abandon her purpose long ere this. But, oh! my darling,—pure, sensitive, refined as you are, how will you ever bear the trials that lie before you? For the stage is like that sullied yet aristocratic society which the younger Dumas describes in one of his greatest comedies, and whereof he says, "It is an elevation for those who arrive from below,—it is a descent for those who arrive from above!"

But after all, am I not looking too persistently on the darker side?—a weakness of which I must cure myself, by the way. The stage is a profession like another, only it has less drawbacks and fewer uncertainties than have other artistic careers. For the author or the artist must wait till the caprice of the public seeks out and appreciates their works. The history of their lives is, under the best circumstances and with but rare exceptions, a record of empty hopes and wasted endeavors. But a trained and intelligent actor or actress has work to do that is settled and understood, and is to be paid for. Success in that profession does indeed depend greatly on the finding of a good opening, but that

is true of any form of seeking a living to which the impecunious youth may betake himself or herself.

There are drawbacks in all professions,—there are drawbacks I know in mine to counterbalance its manifold advantages. But literary work has the one immense advantage for a woman of being practised in the quiet seclusion of her own room, out of the way of interference or of hindering jealousies or cabals. As to the fame that the writer, whether of newspaper articles or magazine stories, may gain, that is indeed but an empty breath. How long does the reputation of a popular writer of such things last? I asked Ursula the other day if she had ever read any of Fanny Forrester's writings, and she confessed, with some surprise at the question, that she had never even heard her name. Yet, somewhere over thirty years ago, what a run her productions had in the popular American periodicals of the day! I remember how all we school-girls devoured her stories and sketches, and longed to imitate her, and win as much celebrity, so swiftly and seemingly so easily, and some of us tried to do the like, and failed lamentably in the attempt. It was N. P. Willis who launched that fragile bark on the troubled waters of literature. Was it in the "Mirror" or the "Home Journal" that he published her first letter? It is so long ago that I cannot remember. But it was all about a balzarine dress that she wanted to buy, and it was written with a playful ease of style that even to-day would not be without its charm. What *was* balzarine, by

the way, I wonder, and does any one wear such a material now? Very likely if we only knew it, for half the new things are only old ones under different names. Well, Fanny Forrester did call into being a host of imitators, only one of which—Grace Greenwood—achieved anything like a permanent place in literature. I remember one enthusiastic aspirant for literary distinction, who wrote to the editor of a fashionable magazine to declare that she would be fully satisfied with such meed of fame as had fallen to the share of Fanny Forrester. Does anybody ever go back and read her productions nowadays I wonder? They must seem as dry and sapless as a pressed flower. I remember finding one day a copy of her "Alderbrook" in some out-of-the-way corner of my library; two thin volumes bound in purple and gold, made up of stories and sketches, around whose style there still clung a faint, old-fashioned sweetness like the breath of one of those pot-pourri jars so much in vogue in the days of our great-grandmothers, or of the pressed flowers to which I have just likened them. She was a Miss Emily Chubbuck, I believe. I wonder if she enjoyed her literary success? It would seem that she did not care much for it, for she became the fourth wife of a missionary, and went out to Burmah to die. Had she lived and gone on writing she might have produced something worth while after a time. She had a great influence on the school-girl world of her day. I recollect how I wrote myself some dismal verses and signed them "Effie Eglantine," for alliteration was of course essential in those days (in

a nom-de-plume), and sent them to one of the magazines. Ah, how I rejoiced when they were actually accepted, and still more when I beheld them really in print! Back to me through the mist and pain of the intervening years comes the remembrance of the keen bliss of that latter moment. It meant more to me than I then dreamed of, that swift, evanescent joy. Does the young soldier ever realize when he first lifts a sword or loads a pistol that he is taking the first step in learning how to defend his own life? Literature has been the weapon wherewith I have fought the battle of life,—my toy in happier hours has served in darker moments to keep the wolf at bay. As for fame,—that glorious guerdon of which Ursula talks so earnestly,—it can never be mine, nor would I care for it now in these weary later days. Were the renown of George Eliot or of George Sand offered for my acceptance, I would, had I the choice, exchange it gladly for just one year of the old, bright, happy, careless existence that was mine in that golden-freighted past that weighs so heavily upon the present. Ay, and the more willingly if that little year "were rounded by a sleep."

"Forse il cielo un giorno avro
Pietà di me!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE AMERICAN COLONY.

"ARE you going to the American Minister's reception next Tuesday evening?"

This is the question that has passed from lip to lip in the American colony for a week past. There has been a fluttering of feathers among the daintiest plumaged birds on the American bough. For the Ministerial receptions of late have been invariably charming. Both the genial host, whose kindly smile and warm hand-pressure make one feel at home at once on entering his drawing-room, and his fair, delicate wife, whose refined intellectuality of feature and expression tell of high qualities of mind as well as of heart, have a potent gift of making things delightful. There is a sort of pervading atmosphere of enjoyment about their drawing-room. It is not the flowers, nor the lights, nor the refreshments, nor the music, nor each and all combined. It is the influence of two of the finest natures that I have ever found blended in sympathetic union since first I began to study social life.

The excitement has penetrated even to the Magne *pension.* Mrs. Welford has unpacked her latest Worth ball toilette, and nobly resolves to peril it

for the sake of sustaining the reputation of our countrywomen for taste in dress. Miss Clint has ordered a black velvet for the occasion, and quarrelled with her washerwoman about three sous overcharge last Monday, on account of her own extravagance. Mrs. Clyde formally announced her intention of going, and of getting a new dress from Worth's, but gave up the idea on finding that the white tulle and roses on which she had set her heart would cost somewhere in the neighborhood of a thousand francs. So she developed instead an incipient case of internal cancer, and shut herself up to attend to it. But Ursula is going, thanks to my inventive talent, which has more than once been exercised in making much out of nothing in the way of gowns. "How I should like to go!" she exclaimed, but then with a shade of sorrowful renunciation dimming her great radiant eyes she added, "But of course that is impossible,—I have no dress."

"Trust to me, little one, and we will see if that difficulty cannot be overcome."

"But I have nothing that by any stretch of the imagination could be converted into an evening dress. Not even the traditional white muslin and blue sash that all poor girls are supposed to possess."

"And which is one of the most extravagant dresses that can be worn, as it is fresh for one wearing only, and costs a fortune in the washing. Now, if you will consent to appear in a picturesque if rather antiquated costume, I think I can contrive it."

"Can you? oh! I shall be so glad! You know I have never been anywhere—*anywhere.*" And the loose leaves of the MS. of the fifth act of "Lady Jane Grey" went flying all over the room as the impetuous girl sprang to my side. "What are we to do, Aunt Jane? And what is your idea?"

"My idea is that you shall first go and pick up all those papers. What would George say if he were to come in and find his heroine's touching farewell to her maidens strewn upon the floor? Good,—and now we will go up-stairs and see what we can find among your grandmother's treasures."

I pass over the preliminary arrangements and contrivances, wherein a very little money had to go a great way, but really, when the eventful evening arrived and Ursula came to my parlor ready to depart, I could not but feel satisfied with the result of our united efforts. She did not look like a Parisian young lady on her way to her first ball, but rather like some vivid sketch by the younger Madrazo, just stepped from its frame. Even that unrivalled colorist might have been proud to reproduce the deepened bloom on her cheek, the pure transparency of her brow and throat beneath the dusky shadows of her silken hair, the shining depths of her expressive eyes. She was dressed in a black velvet corsage, cut square and filled in with fine old lace that had once belonged to her mother, while the half short sleeves showed off the rounded whiteness of her arm beneath ruffles of the same delicate material. The skirt was of black satin, a relic of her grandmother's former magnificence, its

frayed and worn condition being wholly hidden beneath draperies of black Chantilly lace, from my own stores, confined by clusters of deep red roses. One single rose was in the rich dark hair, and one was fastened in the front of her corsage.

"Will I do, Aunt Jane?" she asked as she paused before me, flushed and quivering with the pretty excitement of a young girl just starting for her first ball. I kissed her in silence instead of replying. And she did not know that the kiss was given less to her than to the memories of other bright young creatures that I had decked for gay scenes in bygone days and that remember me no more.

But I put all intrusive memories aside as I gazed admiringly and fondly at the fresh young beauty before me. After all, it is not a hard matter to dress a girl of seventeen. She who possesses that choicest ornament of womanhood—youth—can dispense with much else in the way of adornment. I, lacking that exquisite and divinest parure, would fain array myself in richest brocades, velvets, and satins, as of yore. But nowadays my toilette is perforce of the simplest. A new black silk for one winter does duty the next, with a jacket of Chantilly lace slipped over it to hide the glossy look of the worn silk and the frayed places at the seams. Luckily this is my year for a new gown, so I can act as chaperone to my radiant darling with but few misgivings on the score of my own attire.

George Brandon has arrived to act as our escort, and very handsome does he look in his black dress-suit, which a fortunate order or two has enabled

him to get out of pawn. Yet, toiling Bohemian as he is, George never looks otherwise than like a gentleman. The grand poise of that fair head of his would rescue his appearance from the limbo of commonplace roughness or vulgarity were he clad in rags. To-night, as he comes forward with all the nameless grace and distinction about him that are born of innate refinement as well as of early association, white-gloved, well dressed, and carrying his crush-hat with as much ease as though Belgravia and not Bohemia was his destined home, I was struck anew with the manliness and charm of his appearance. And then I looked at the tall, slender girl in lace and roses beside him, with her wonderful eyes lighted with the glow of youthful excitement and anticipation, and as I looked I felt proud of my adopted niece and nephew.

Blessings on the man who first invented Paris cabs, that noble institution by which we of the vast band of the impecunious can gain a ball-room or go visiting with ease and comfort combined with economy! It does not seem five minutes ere we are preening our ruffled plumes in the spacious antechamber of the Ministerial abode. Then we pass into the brilliantly-lighted drawing-room, pausing only to exchange a hand-clasp with our host and a nod with our hostess, as the incoming crowd is great and we must hurry on. The rooms are transformed by lofty, rich-foliaged tropical plants into something of the likeness of a vast conservatory, the freshness, and sweetness, and daintiness of which seem somehow a fitting background for our

gentle, refined, and intellectual hostess. From amidst the ferns and palms that transform one of the deep-embrasured windows into the likeness of a sylvan bower comes Mrs. Thurston Harding, superb in black velvet and old Venetian point. She makes room for me on the low sofa beside her, introduces Ursula to half a dozen young men in a breath, and then, leaving the young people thereafter to their own devices, she turns her attention to the scene around her.

"I believe most heartily," she says, "in bringing up our American girls in Paris after the American fashion, that is to say, so far as they associate with Americans. Do you think I would have handed your pretty Ursula over so unceremoniously to the safe-keeping of a party of Parisian swells, be they peers or parvenus? Not I,—I have lived here too long for that. My young friends are all Americans born and bred,—you may trust your fair protégée unquestioningly to their care for a promenade through the rooms and a halt at the refreshment-table, and if they do indulge in a little chat under one of these great palm-trees, her little pearl-shell ear will never have cause to turn a shade the rosier for any words that our young countrymen may whisper into it."

"I do get so cross sometimes," continues Mrs. Harding, settling herself comfortably in a corner of the little satin-covered sofa, "with some of our American mothers abroad who take it into their heads that they must bring up their girls in the European fashion, and so succeed in making prim

little prudes and hypocrites of them, instead of genuine, natural young women. I declare I was at the Salon the other day with my niece, Kitty Harding. Up comes Mrs. Ellison with her daughter Lydia, and Mrs. Ellison sits down beside me to rest. So I suggested that while we were resting the girls might walk around the room and look at the pictures. But Mrs. Ellison was quite shocked at the suggestion. It would never do for Lydia to be seen strolling around the room with another young girl and no visible chaperone,—as if anybody could even invent any harm in looking at a landscape or admiring a portrait or a marine view. So I said to myself mentally, this is all bosh and botheration nonsense, but I acquiesced in silence, for everybody has a right to manage their own affairs in their own way. Only I look at the American girls who are trained after that fashion, and I do not see that they are one whit more modest or lady-like than are those who are reared in our good old home style. In fact, these stiff little automata that sit up with their hands crossed and their eyes down, like most other creatures that are unnaturally restrained, only ask for a chance to cut far worse capers than do their freer sisters. I have known of some of these model damsels going off to see one of the worst operas of the opera-bouffe repertoire on the sly, and reading the very worst novels of the modern French press in secret. And all the time they could hardly endure to be looked at, they were so modest! And then they must not go here, and they must not go there, for fear of hearing or seeing something that

they should not. Now, as to this latter point, if only these particular mammas were consistent, one would respect them for sheltering their children from all evil influences. But I notice that these extra-watchful matrons will permit their guarded daughters to witness any kind of an abomination at the Théâtre Français. That is high art, you know,—art with a capital A. *Mademoiselle de Belle Isle* and *L'Etrangère* are all very well, because they are given at the Comédie Française, but the young ladies must not think of going to hear *Le Petit Duc* or *Les Bourgeois de Pont-Arcy.* The first is an opera-bouffe, and in the last there is mention made of a man who once had a mistress, though else they are moral enough. As if a girl who was not wholly an idiot could grow to womanhood in Paris, of all cities of the world, and never hear about such incidents in real life! I wonder how these very particular mammas ever permit their daughters to read history, or their Bibles either, for that matter"

I could not refrain from smiling at my old friend's vehemence, though I cordially agreed with her in all that she said. She went on, however, unheeding.

"Now, *L'Etrangère* is simply the very worst piece that has been put upon the Parisian boards for years,—it is an open apology for adultery (and that expressed in the plainest of language) from beginning to end. But Propriety, Prunes, and Prisms (did you ever read Little Dorrit?) all fade into nothingness before the magic of high art. But to return to the question of training. If these Frenchified

matrons would only look at the results of the French system in the young French girls themselves, I do not think they would be so ready to adopt it. Yet, perhaps they would under any circumstances. Such prejudices are only another form of that un-Americanization which seizes like a malady on so many of our country-people when they come abroad."

Mrs. Harding paused, fanned herself, and surveyed the scene. The rooms were filling rapidly. From our sheltered nook we could see into the great drawing-room beyond, lustrous with light and with the blended colors of velvets, satins, and brocades. The groups changed, formed, broke up, and formed again, showing to us the familiar forms and faces of most of the female notabilities of the American colony; the lovely intellectual wife of the first secretary of our Legation, looking in her white satin and pearls like a fair and royal bride; beauteous Mrs. Grasscutter in pale gold-color, with an ostrich plume in her raven hair; Mrs. Upton in pale-blue satin, point-lace, and diamonds; Mrs. Bryan showing as a very vision in misty laces and shimmering pearls, and with her queenly-looking mother, Mrs. Wallingford, beside her in black brocade and priceless old Venetian guipure;—they came and went like some splendid pageant provided solely for our delectation. Above the murmur of conversation rose the strains of an unseen orchestra. The air was odorous with the breath of flowers. Against the fresh, cool background of foliage the dresses, the uniforms, the quaint costumes of Chinese diplomats and Arab chieftains

showed like the figures in one of the pictures of Madrazo.

"What a pity it is," said Mrs. Harding, "that any incongruous element should enter into so brilliant a scene! Just look at that sharp-looking little woman in a brown and black stuff plaid gown, made by herself if one may trust to the irregularities of the skirt and the inartistic handling of the buttonholes. Now, what brought her to a Ministerial reception in such a guise? She would not go to a fashionable church in one of our large cities, I presume, in a calico wrapper and a sunbonnet. Yet such a garb would be quite as appropriate and suitable there as the one she has got on is at such an entertainment as this. She probably has no better, you say? Then she ought to get one,—or else stay at home. There is no physical, political, or religious necessity for her to come to a grand evening reception. She forms a false note,—a discord. Besides, you need not tell me that she can afford no better gown than the one she wears. She belongs to the great don't-care-what-I-have-got-on society. She scorns the little amenities of the world, and the small graces of dress and deportment. I know who she is very well,—Miss Wackles, the lecturer on Woman's Rights. Now she, scorning all rules respecting society, ought to keep out of society. It is the same with the pair that went out just now, the woman in a waterproof and a felt hat, and the man in a frock coat and buff trousers. Now I call such a get-up as that a positive act of rudeness towards one's host and hostess, whoever they may be.

It is the fashion adopted by our English guests at home of showing their else unutterable contempt for their Yankee entertainers. By the way, I heard of such a charming reproof administered by a Swedish gentleman to two English lords the other day. He had invited them to dine with him, and they came in frock-coats, checked trousers, and without gloves. Smilingly surveying their costumes, he remarked, 'Oh, I see you have quite mistaken the style of my dinner; it is not a simple family affair at all, but a formal entertainment. So I shall give orders to my cook to put it off for half an hour so as to give you gentlemen time to go home and dress!'"

"They would hardly have received even so delicate a reproof as that in America," I remarked. "If our society-people have one weakness above another, it is for titled Englishmen. The rudeness they will meekly endure at their hands is something beyond belief. Do I not remember how, in Quakeropolis, Mr. Edgars, of the 'Daily Thunderer,' was invited to a superb dinner-party gotten up expressly in his honor, and at which he appeared in a shepherd's plaid walking-suit, when every other man present was punctiliously arrayed in the orthodox dress-suit and white necktie? And is it not on record how Lady Sparkleby, at a dinner-party which was given to her by the wife of one of our leading citizens, exclaimed, on having a plate of terrapin placed before her, 'Oh, take the nasty stuff away,—I cannot endure the sight of it!' And did not Sir Digglesby Digges attend sundry grand dinner-parties at New-

port in a black velvet morning coat? Yet who ever heard of a free-born American citizen resenting any of these small but significant tokens of contempt?"

"And then their ingratitude!" quoth Mrs. Harding, waxing warm in her indignation. "Do I not remember how one of our great Western millionnaires took a certain noble lord to his home and entertained him royally, going so far as to charter a special train to take him to some point of interest that he wished to visit? His lordship was enthusiastic in his expressions of friendship towards his kind host. 'Now if you ever come to London, be sure that you let me know at once,' was his parting injunction. Well, one day our Western gentleman concluded that he would go to Europe. Arrived in London, he sent his card as requested to his noble friend. A few days later the Englishman left his card in return, with two tickets for a review that was to take place on the next day, and a polite note requesting the American to call at his lordship's house at a certain time to go with him. Owing to a balky cab-horse the guest was five minutes late at the place of rendezvous. His lordship was gone, leaving no word or message. And from that day to this our over-hospitable countryman has never seen him or heard from him. But even that was not quite so bad as the remark made by Lord Harry Lackland respecting Mrs. MacGillicuddy, when he was in America. That lady petted him and fêted him to a perfectly absurd extent, but at all events he accepted all her entertainments and

attentions for a whole winter. In the spring Mrs. MacGillicuddy went to Europe. 'I am so glad,' remarked Lord Harry in the hearing of one of my friends, 'that she did not ask me for a letter of introduction to my mother before she left, for, *of course*, I should have had to refuse it!' Now, a good many of these Briton-feeders are genuine snobs, who deserve all they get, but the majority of them are generous, warm-hearted, hospitable beings, who delight in showing kindness and attention to their foreign guests irrespective of their social position. And it hurts one to see how entirely their hospitality is scorned and ignored. But there is no use in discussing this subject any longer; it always makes me indignant and spoils my pleasure for the moment whenever I get to talking about it!" And Mrs. Harding fanned herself vigorously, as though to cool her irate feelings.

"I think," said I, by way of dismissing the topic, "that it would be as well were Americans hereafter to wait to be entertained before they so vehemently take to entertaining. Let our citizens abroad wait till Sir This and Lord That seek them out at their hotels, and take them to their houses, and lavish innumerable dinners and balls, opera-boxes and drives, special trains and private yacht-voyages upon them, before they enthusiastically bestow such attentions on the travelling Briton in their own land. Now let us change the subject, and do tell me who that remarkable-looking person on the other side of the room is,—the lady with red hair, and a red face, and a red gown,—all red, in fact, like a fresh

spring radish. She would be rather good-looking were she only twenty years younger."

"My dear," answered Mrs. Harding, "you have asked a conundrum that most of us gave up in despair over a year ago. That lady is a myth,—a Sphinx,—a What is It in petticoats. Or rather she is a human chameleon. She has as many personalities as an antique goddess. When she first appeared in the American colony of Paris she was Mrs. General Spinks. But, strange to say, the army-lists of the United States bore the name of no such general. Then she was known as Mrs. Senator Spinks, though the records of the Senate were equally silent respecting the gifted Spinks. I believe now that that protean and invisible personage is styled Professor Spinks. 'On whom is that embrace bestowed,—on the General, the Senator, or the Professor,' Spinks is wont to remark when his wife kisses him; at least so the lady herself has been heard to observe. She has not kissed him lately, for she has lived in Paris for the past five years. Her acquaintance with the great people of the United States is something wonderful. She always alludes to Mrs. General Grant as 'her dear Julia,' and the present incumbent of the Presidential chair is 'her old friend Dick Hayes.' But, somehow or other, the acquaintance is never mutual. According to her own statement her home in America was composed of halls of dazzling light. In fact, Mrs. Bryan's hotel is the only private residence in Paris that can at all compare with her house in New York, but the ceilings of the Spinks mansion were by far

the highest, and its furniture included the trifling item of seven grand pianos. How she could leave such scenes of luxury to come and vegetate in a small apartment in Paris is hard to understand. And what is very odd, I have never come across any one who had ever been inside of that wonderful house. I think that, like the 'Bohemian Girl' of the well-known opera, she dreamed that she dwelt in marble halls, and woke up and imagined that her dream was a reality."

"But who and what is she?"

"Just what you see her to be and what I have been saying that she is,—a woman with a red head and a taste for boasting. I believe that the simple truth is that her husband is a doctor in a small way in New York, and she used to keep a summer boarding-house somewhere in the suburbs,—nothing derogatory to her of course, but a station widely removed from intimacy with all the leading people of the city and a house with frescoed ceilings that contained such a curious if monotonous collection of musical instruments as I have mentioned. There is not a bit of harm in her I believe, any more than there is in old Baroness Blank (whom I discern over there in the distance, in sky-blue silk and pink roses), but she is a great bother. She and I used to exchange calls for a while, till I learned she was in the habit of alluding to me as 'that dear old thing Kitty Harding,' whereupon our acquaintance came to a sudden termination. Now tell me, in your turn, who is that tall, graceful lady with the beautifully outlined head and features and the lovely dark

eyes who bowed to you a few minutes ago,—the one in white I mean, with so many diamonds?"

"That is Miss Emma Fairmont, a noted Quakeropolis belle, who is a great favorite in the best circles of London and Nice. She is an accomplished vocalist besides being a belle and a beauty, and an amateur actress as well, of such talent that Lester Wallack once declared that with a single year of professional experience she would eclipse Mrs. Hoey in her palmiest days."

"Talking of amateur singing, were you at the Faye concert a week ago? No? My dear, you missed a treat. Flora Faye is seventy if she is a year old, and she gave scenes from *Faust* and *Hamlet* in costume. Imagine her as 'Ophelia,' will you not? warbling with tender sweetness, if in a remarkably cracked voice, her share of the duet with 'Hamlet.' But I think that her 'Marguerite' was the most delicious impersonation of the two, it was so full of girlish grace and innocent playfulness. She had gotten a new yellow wig expressly for the occasion (she forgot what her own hair looked like long years ago), and in the midst of the Jewel Song it worked loose, went askew, and got cocked over one of her poor old eyes. And there she stood trilling and flourishing away, all unconscious of the absurdity of her own appearance."

"Is she here to-night?"

"I believe not. She danced the German at the Turkish Minister's ball last evening, and I presume that her venerable bones would not stand another such shaking up in so short a space of time."

"I think," said I, "that the longer I live in Europe the more heartily do I appreciate the sensibleness and appropriateness of that social law of our own land that confines the lighter forms of society-amusements to the young. It is far better for girls and boys to preside over our dances than it is for society to afford the piteous spectacle of old women who might have been grandmothers prancing around in waltzes and galops with their rattling bones swathed in white muslin and Valenciennes, and with roses niddle-nodding on their shaky heads. Dickens's Dora Copperfield and Rose Bud are not very high types among his creations, but either of them would grace a drawing-room better than his Mrs. Skewton."

CHAPTER IX.

THE AMERICAN COLONY (CONTINUED).

A PAUSE for refreshments. We have enjoyed sundry ices, cakes, and sandwiches, have made the tour of the rooms, and have settled down again into our corner. The crowd is very great. We catch a glimpse of some of our artistic celebrities; Mr. Bridgman, looking calmly unconscious of his new-won honors, as symbolized by the red ribbon of the Legion of Honor in his buttonhole; Mr. Blashfield with the laurels of his "Commodus" yet green upon

his brow; Mr. Healy, courteous, smiling and winning, with a keen eye for the fair faces and graceful forms that he loves to transfer to canvas; the earnest, intelligent face of the young and gifted Pearce, and others not yet known to fame.

"Who is that slender, Spanish-looking lady, with the great, transparent eyes, who has just stopped to speak to Mrs. Upton?" I asked of Mrs. Harding.

"That is Mrs. Heyland, of San Francisco, one of the most charming hostesses of our American colony. The graceful young girl beside her in white gauze and pearls is her daughter, and a very winning specimen is she of American girlhood. The tall, stylish-looking lady, whose prematurely gray hair and erect, trim figure, in its black dress and Roman sash, have so picturesque an effect, is Eda Emerson, the oldest daughter of the widowed Madame Villani, who was, as you know, an American lady. A model daughter and sister is she in all respects, but she is not fond of society, so I am rather surprised at seeing her here to-night. She has two very decided penchants, one for Arthur Sullivan's ballads, and the other for the French classic drama; she can quote you Racine and Corneille by the square yard. But she is so good a girl that I can almost forgive her for adoring that most stupid of all forms of dramatic literature. That young gentleman who has just come in is Mr. Mortimer Rayle, of whom a good story is told. A French gentleman happened to remark one day lately, at the club, that, as the United States was a Republic, there could be no divisions of social rank

known there. 'I beg your pardon,' responded Mr. Rayle; 'there are as many and as marked gradations of that nature in our society as there are in that of Europe.' 'And may I ask what your own position is in your native land?' 'Certainly,—the standing of the Rayles in America is equivalent to that of the De Rohans in France.' Whereupon his American acquaintances dubbed him De Rohan Rayle on the spot, and he has gone by that name ever since."

"That is something like an anecdote that they used to tell about Percival Upperten in Quakeropolis some years ago. He was once lamenting to a foreign lady of rank the fact that there are no titles in the United States. 'For had there been, madam,' he added, 'from my birth and social position I should have been Duke of New York and Prince of Philadelphia'!"

Just then two lively little girls passed, linked arm and arm. The one was a brunette in cream silk and crape, with deep red roses in her hair, the other, a blonde, wore pale-blue silk and pearls. They did not in the least resemble each other, though both had the trim figures and graceful carriage which are among the striking characteristics of youthful American girls.

"There go the Siamese twins as they are called,—girl-friends of over four years' standing, with never the shadow of a quarrel or an estrangement in their long years' intimacy,—Nelly Challis and Kitty Warner. The blonde is the daughter of my old friend, Mrs. Challis, and the brunette is the eldest daughter

of our noted physician, Dr. Warner. Genuine American girls are they both, brought up after the American fashion, but neither fast, forward, nor vulgar, as our foreign detractors and American admirers of foreign ways so often declare our girls to be. I know they are longing for a dance to-night by the very skip of their satin slippers, for they are indefatigable dancers, and enjoy a 'German' with a degree of heartiness and enthusiasm that is quite refreshing to witness in this *blasé* generation."

"So you believe heartily in our American girls as I do, Daisy Miller to the contrary notwithstanding?"

"Daisy Miller," responded Mrs. Harding, with a wave of her fan, "is one type of the American girl. She exists, my dear,—no doubt of that. I met her at Geneva last summer. There were two of her, and she went out driving without her mother and with the courier on the front seat. She received gentleman visitors in her bedroom. She went out rowing on the lake with bearded foreigners and remained out till near midnight. There are always some Daisy Millers in Europe. Not very many of them, it is true, but they *do* exist, as I said before. Only I am sorry that Mr. Henry James saw fit to impale this poor little American butterfly on an English pin. For our dear cousins across the Channel are only too fond of picking holes in our social garments. There was no need to poke so pointed a pen through that particular hole and so make it evident to the least curious observer. And of course every English man, woman, or

child, who has read about that extraordinary young woman, declares that all American girls are just like her. When my niece, Kitty Harding, was in London last spring, she had Daisy Miller talked at her the whole time. Nobody believes that Mr. Howell's lovely 'Lady of the Aroostook' is as genuinely an American picture as was that brilliant sketch. But I forgive Mr. James after all, for did he not write 'An International Episode' and say therein a quantity of things that I was longing to say, and far better than I could ever have said them? Still, as Trollope objects to Thackeray's 'Lectures on the Four Georges' because they were written for delivery in America, I enter a meek protest against the serving up of our fast girls and our flirts in foreign magazines by our own writers."

"I think, after all," I responded, "that the American girls of Miss Alcott are the most thoroughly typical of any of these young damsels that live and breathe in the world of fiction. They have all the winning little ways, and perversities, and adorable foibles, and all the sweetness and cleverness of the originals, and then the influence that they exercise over their male companions is so beautifully and accurately indicated,—not described nor held up obtrusively,—it is as delicately shown as it is in real life."

"Then there is another type of the American girl that has not yet been described in fiction, I believe," answered Mrs. Harding. "I will give you an example of the type that I mean. There on the other side of the room is Miss Minturn, the

daughter of the ex-Governor of New York. She is only a year or two on the shady side of twenty, yet she is a self-possessed, high-bred society-lady. If her father were called to the White House to-morrow, she could assume the queenship of the Presidential mansion without a doubt or a tremor. There are plenty such girls in our best society, uniting in delicious combination the freshness of youth with the social finish of womanhood; the charm of the blossom joined to that of the ripened fruit. Our peculiar mode of training produces such finished and dainty specimens, even more than it does Daisy Millers. Yet some of our moralists at home are crying out, apropos of the adventures of that young person, for a thorough change in the American method of bringing up our young girls."

"I hope," I answered, warmly, "that our American parents will have sense enough to let them cry in vain. It is bad enough to have those that live over here get into the French idea about training their daughters. Woe to America when the fancy once gets implanted in the brain of our matrons that every American girl is at heart no better than she ought to be, and every American youth a libertine!"

"My dear!" interrupted Mrs. Harding, looking shocked, "you do use such very strong language!"

"Perhaps I do,—but is not that the meaning of all this watching and guarding, and never letting a girl out of your sight? I thoroughly agree with the American mother, who made answer to the French lady who was exhorting her to adopt the

foreign system with regard to her daughters, 'If I thought my girls needed to be watched after that fashion, I would sew every one of them up separately in a sack, and throw them all into the Seine.' Yet I perfectly agree with the Frenchwoman in denying all social privileges to her countrymen. These French mothers understand what manner of men they have to deal with, and they deal with them according to their knowledge. And we should do the same so far as our French acquaintances are concerned, *that* I will admit. Only, heaven forbid that in the United States such a system should ever become necessary or even tolerable. Our men would have to sink very low before an American mother should show to her young gentlemen visitors—the boys that she had seen grow up from babyhood around her, and that she knows are clean of life and chivalrous of nature—that she will not trust one of them to walk or talk for an hour unwatched with her daughter. Ah, our American men,—the true knights-errant are they of the nineteenth century,—chevaliers *sans reproche* as truly as *sans peur!* I declare when I first read the 'Lady of the Aroostook' I literally kissed the printed page that did such noble and deserved justice to my countrymen!"

"The fact is," said Mrs. Harding, "that one-half of the scrapes that our fast girls and flirts get into over here, is owing to the fact that they have been used to dealing with so high a type of man at home. The American who will say a rude or coarse thing to a woman, or will treat her with disrespect, must

have very strong provocation. Oh! I know there are exceptions to the rule, as witness that pet of the up-town set, dear Willie Claye. But such moral monsters as he *are* the exception,—the wide exception. And the very thing that makes our men in general the noble and chivalrous protectors of womanhood in its weakness and its purity, is the one point in our social system that the would-be copier of foreign manners most loudly condemns, namely, the free, unrestricted companionship of the youth of both sexes. An American boy from his infancy is taught to look upon his little girl playmate as a creature to be watched over and cared for as a being more fragile and more delicate than himself, and one whose guardian he is to pride himself on becoming. And so on, from childhood and boyhood up to manhood, he learns the hallowed lesson of reverence for womanhood from those that are the daily companions of his life, the sharers and the objects of all his social pleasures, the fair and gentle comrades whose influence is at once elevating and refining, and from whose number he will one day choose the destined partner of his life. No such sweet maiden influences surround the young Frenchman. If he associates with women in his youth outside of his own home, they will not be fair, innocent young girls of his own station,—such intercourse is forbidden by the social laws of his native land."

"I wish," I said, "that the young American girls who come to Paris to study art would realize that they no longer have their countrymen, or a race in any

respect like them, to deal with, and refrain from entering the men's classes at the studios to study from the nude living model."

"Take care, my dear," interrupted Mrs. Harding, "you are treading on dangerous ground. You are combating the holy and elevated tendencies of art,—always with a capital A."

"But just listen. Last winter a father and mother —Mr. and Mrs. Miggs, from Minnesota—came to Paris and stopped at the Magne boarding-house. They had brought with them their young daughter Carrie,—pretty as a pink, and just seventeen years old,—who wished to study painting. The poor child had got the very common notion into her head that to become an artist one must cease to be a woman. So she flung aside her natural modesty and reserve, and entered Vinoy's preparatory class, wherein she was the only female member. She took her mother with her to act as her chaperone when she went to the studio to draw. Neither of them knew a word of French, but the old lady, dear, good old soul, had a vague idea that something was wrong when she saw and heard the unkempt Bohemians laughing and jesting around her. 'I cannot get used to it, Miss Anson,' she said to me afterwards. 'When that naked woman came out and stood up on the platform before us all, the students all poked each other, and laughed, and looked at us,—and I did feel so sorry for Carrie!' Luckily Mr. Miggs found out what was going on, and carried his women-folk home forthwith. 'Art is art,' said the sturdy old man, 'but decency is

decency.' Now, was he or were the women-folk aforesaid in the right?"

"I am afraid," responded Mrs. Harding, "that I am too old-fashioned a woman to answer that question aright. While granting a young girl all harmless freedom, I would do everything to keep her pure and modest in thought and action. I would not let my niece Kitty indulge in such lessons,—you may be sure of that, though I do let her go out to walk sometimes with Ursula, and that without a chaperone. You remember that pretty Miss Prendergast who took lessons from Lacroute for so long? She posed to him for the head of one of his naked figures in the 'Apotheosis of Anne of Austria.' Some one asked her if she had sat to him for the whole figure. 'Oh, no,' she made answer, 'mine is a *great deal* better than that.' Now if you do not call that demoralization I do not know what demoralization is."

"My dear friend, if people would only be as particular about actions and associates as they are about words and plays and stories, it would be a great deal better for the world. Look, for instance, at the general charity towards fallen women of intellect or of fashion which is creeping into the best social circles. Did I not meet Mrs. St. Magdalen, the heroine of the great divorce case, at Mrs. Leonard's the other day? 'Poor thing, she had such a brute of a husband and she is so truly penitent,' they say. Is that a reason for bringing her into contact with our pure young girls, a woman who shamelessly defied the laws of God and man

for months, it may be years, and would have gone on defying them had she not happened to get found out? Look at Florence Lestrange queening it in society down in Rome, and getting invitations for her countrymen and countrywomen from dukes and cardinals. We all know about her little affair with the Khedive of Egypt, to say nothing of a dozen American legends of the spiciest nature. Now I hold that the spectacle of a fashionable yet impure woman, received, caressed, and unpunished, does far more towards injuring the moral sense of a young girl than all the naughty plays in Paris, from the *Timbale d'Argent* down to *L'Assommoir*. Yet you will see mothers who will not permit their daughters to witness *Les Cloches de Corneville*, receiving, welcoming, and countenancing *les catins à la mode.*"

"Strong language, Miss Anson,—'tis well you put it into French. Spades are never to be called spades nowadays, as you ought to know. So you do not believe in holding out the hand of charity to an erring but repentant sister?"

"Of course I do,—when the sister aforesaid is a washerwoman or a seamstress,—some poor creature to whom temptation has come in a wellnigh irresistible guise. But to the society-woman, guarded, cared for, sheltered, Temptation never comes as an uninvited guest. I tell you that when once, from mistaken charity or any other motive, our matrons suffer the barriers that keep our society pure to be broken down, thereafter will come the deluge, not of the rains from heaven, but of the unclean waters from the sewers of Sin. Look at the extraordi-

nary spectacle that English society has so lately afforded, the once severe British matron courting and caressing Mlle. Rosa Richardt with her four children in the background, and never a husband to bless herself withal. How is the British matron to explain the situation to the British maiden? And this in the land that once boasted of its rigid morality,—that even now is too pious to permit *La Dame aux Camélias* to be presented on its stage. Which is the worst, I should like to know,—*La Dame aux Camélias* in make-believe behind the footlights or the real article in your drawing-room or at your banquets? Verily, I begin to believe that the social regeneration of Cora Coral or of Bebé Wilson is not impossible—across the Channel."

Just then Ursula came up leaning on the arm of George Brandon, her cheeks glowing and her eyes sparkling with excitement. She had had such a delightful evening,—she had been introduced to a host of notabilities, and had promenaded, and chatted, and enjoyed the music, and was so charmed with our Minister and his gentle, courteous wife, and altogether she was only sorry that her pleasure was drawing to a close. Might she take one more tour of the rooms,—only one?

"Yes,—one more,—and then come back, little one, for we must look for a carriage, and people are already beginning to depart."

"Miss Vane looks exceedingly pretty to-night," observed Mrs. Harding as she turned away, "but what in the world possessed her to get herself up in so old a style? The dress is becoming and

picturesque, I will admit, but it is unsuited to her years,—it is quite old enough for either you or me."

"Simply because the poor child had no choice. She either had to come in a dress old enough for her grandmother, or else stay away altogether."

"Well, at all events her dress is rich and appropriate if it is too old in style for her years. I suppose that is the reason she has never yet gone into society."

"You are right,—nor would she have been here to-night but for my inventive genius for getting up a toilette out of odds and ends."

During this brief dialogue Mrs. Bryan was standing close beside me, conversing with the Spanish Minister in his own language, with apparently as much earnestness as fluency, her glimmering white skirts overflowing my own sober black ones. Yet I never dreamed that she either heard or heeded what we were talking about. But two days later one of her servants brought to my door a large pasteboard box and the following note:

"DEAR MISS ANSON,—These two dresses have just been sent home from the dressmaker's for me, and they do not fit me in any way. You know how I dislike to worry over my dresses; there is nothing on earth that puts me out so much. So I shall take no trouble about them, but send them to you, begging that you will take the annoyance of getting rid of them off of my hands. Perhaps you may know of some young lady-friend of your own to whom you

would like to give them; but, at all events, pray dispose of them as you think best, and oblige,

"Your friend, very truly,

"MARIE LOUISE BRYAN."

I opened the box. Therein lay two exquisite toilettes, one a ball-dress of white crape and silk, the other a reception-dress of pale-blue satin and cashmere. Genuine young girl's dresses were they both, and they had never been made for Mrs. Bryan's wear any more than they had been made for Queen Victoria. I saw through the delicate generosity of the whole affair at a glance.

I looked up at a framed photograph of Mrs. Bryan that hung upon the wall. Then, laying aside the box and letter, I walked straight up to the insensible picture and kissed it once, twice, and thrice.

"When the angels were created," I said, apostrophizing the fair, smiling image before me, "there was just material enough left over to make one sweet woman,—and that is you!"

CHAPTER X.

REGNAT CŒLUM.

A SULTRY, breathless day,—a sudden return of summer heat thus late in the autumn. The weather weighs heavily upon us all. The presence of the stable is even more apparent than usual to our olfactories. Madame Magne alone, unaffected by the heavy atmosphere, flies around as usual, and scolds Mathilde and Caroline with even more than her accustomed shrillness. Early in the day as it is, Monsieur Magne is already nodding in his armchair beside the open window, with Fifine dozing on his knee. The blinds at all the other windows are drawn closely down to exclude the sun, and the house is as quiet as a country church-yard, save for the high-pitched tones of Madame Magne down yonder in the dining-room. My daily stint of writing is done, and well done. I have finished my letter to the "Daily Postal Card," and have described therein a picture that has not yet been exhibited, and a new play that has not yet been produced, and I have given a new and authentic anecdote of M. Gambetta, and a rumor of a forthcoming singer at the Grand Opera, and feel fairly well content with my day's work. So I am quite ready to greet Ursula, when she comes gliding into my room in a fresh Oxford linen costume, with a

pink bow under the collar, but looking languid with the heat in spite of the cool prettiness of her attire. The child seems restless and unsettled. She turns over my small stock of books, reads a page or two in the latest magazines, sets half a dozen stitches in my worsted-work, teases my paroquet till it viciously nips the end of her finger, and finally comes to nestle beside me with a long-drawn sigh.

"Aunt Jane," she says after a pause, "I wish we were all living in a novel."

"And why, little one?"

"Because in novels things always turn out well, and everything that is wrong gets set to rights. For instance, you would have a lot of old shares put away that would suddenly go up and make you immensely rich. And you would go back to Quakeropolis and find your old house just as you left it, for some very wealthy person would have bought it just as it stood, and would let you have it back again for exactly the same price that was paid for it. And you would ask me to come and make you a long visit, and we should all be as happy as the birds. Or else," she continued, half-laughing at her own earnestness, which was by no means wholly feigned, "I should go on the stage, and make an immense success at once, and drive all the managers wild. And George—Mr. Brandon I mean—would paint a wonderful picture that would be *the* picture of the year at the Salon, and he would sell it for an immense sum and go to Italy directly. But in real life one must just go on plodding from day to day."

"Ah, Ursula, there is but one quick way of get-

ting out of what Kinglake in his 'Eothen' calls 'the scrape of being alive and poor,' and that is to die and have done with it. But Christianity forbids that method of shaking off our cares. Many a time though have those lines from Victor Hugo's 'Marion Delorme' rung in my brain in the long, sleepless nights,—

> 'When we are dead, we shall sleep sound and well.
> Hell may be ours, O friend! but 'twill be naught
> After life's pain.'"

Ursula threw her arms around my neck. "I am sorry, Aunt Jane," she said, in a tender and contrite tone, "that I spoke of your old home at all, for I know it hurts you to have it recalled to your mind. But General Morland said the other night that he did not think that you had lost much, for that you had parted with neither your kindred, your health, nor your intellect, and that your literary success ought to compensate you for all your losses."

"Little one," I said, with some bitterness, "I have heard that form of reasoning often before. Is there not some French writer who remarks that there is nothing in the world easier than bearing other people's troubles? Our dear General is doubtless in the right,—there are worse evils in this world than the loss of property. But the man who has had both legs shot off does not feel much consoled by being told that it would have been a great deal worse for him had both his eyes been put out, or if his brain had been injured. And even when the stumps are healed, and the sufferer is hobbling

about on crutches, he cannot wholly forget the days when he walked erect and strong like other men. The world will never be the same to him again even though intellect and eyesight are spared to him. Dear, if the orthodox religionists are right, and I, for my many earthly shortcomings, am plunged hereafter in a future state into some nethermost depth of woe, there are three moments of anguish that I know I shall relive again. The first was that on which I helped with my own hands to pack the last volumes of my library for transmission to their new owner; the second was the beholding, after the sale, of my mother's chair standing on the sidewalk ready to be carried off; and the third was the quenching of the fire on the hearthstone of the house that no longer was my home. See,—I am growing old and weak,—I weep, now, after all those years, remembering that unutterable pain!"

A shower of loving kisses fell upon lip and cheek and brow, my darling's sweet mode of craving pardon for having unwittingly distressed me. I returned her caresses with interest, but the chord once touched, continued to vibrate with a painful thrill.

"Yes, Ursula, dear one, love me well, for indeed I need all your tenderness at times. Have I not lost, not only my home and the happy, genial existence of which it was the symbol, but my dear and many friends as well,—the friends that gathered around me, and aided me, and sustained me when first the crushing blow of utter ruin descended on my head? Ah, the warm, fond hands that then

clasped mine, the busy, kindly brains that toiled in my behalf, the aid and comfort offered freely and warmly as the sunshine from heaven,—between these friends and me there rolls the ocean, pitiless as gravestone or as graveyard sod in hiding the beloved faces from me. And if there comes across the Atlantic some one of all those friends that I loved so well, what is that poor crumb of intercourse compared with the daily feast of loving companionship? Hardly are the lips warm with the first phrases of greeting than they must utter the icy word 'Farewell.' We meet only to part, as travellers on two opposite-bound ships may exchange a few hurried words, a glance or two, the wave of a handkerchief, the hoisting of a flag. And then the wayfarers drift apart, ever farther and farther, till the wide sea lies between them. There are homes that knew my presence as well as did my own whose threshold I shall never cross again. There were sweet, womanly lips whose pressure upon my mouth I sometimes feel in dreams, and whose warm, loving touch shall nevermore be mine. They say that adversity robs you of your friends; the saying is false,—in all my poverty I never lost a friend.

> 'Tell me how Love goeth?
> It was not *Love* that went'

sings the German poet. True friendship dies not under such petty tests,—its glow is but the brighter,—its fervor deeper,—its warmth the more intense. And it is from such friends as these that my exile

parts me,—oh, love, never say again that I have not lost much!"

A tap upon the door here interrupted me, and in response to my quick "Come in" George Brandon entered. He was full of eagerness and animation.

"Good-morning, Aunt Jane,—Miss Ursula——"

I looked up, noting the changed tone in which he uttered this latter name. A shy agitation glowed on Ursula's cheek and lighted her eyes. The listlessness and languor which had oppressed her a moment before were gone. And in the gaze that George fixed upon her blushing face, a look of rapt and adoring admiration that lent an almost feminine softness to his expressive eyes, I read the revelation of a secret that I ought to have guessed at long before. They loved each other.

This discovery flashed upon my mind, bringing with it an overwhelming weight of self-reproach and self-condemnation. What had I done, blind and heedless as I had been, in thus bringing together two young, gifted, attractive beings who could only in their mutual love find a sure pathway to misery and despair? Why had I never guessed that such a result was probable or even possible? Yet, as I now beheld too clearly, it had been from the first wellnigh inevitable. The congeniality of tastes, the similarity of destinies, the suitability of age, nay, more, the rare personal beauty of both, had marked them out as certain to attract each other. Fool that I had been! Why had I not foreseen this conclusion from the very first? Why had I not kept them sternly apart instead of affording,

in my heedlessness of effects, every opportunity for the growth of their mutual passion? I looked at them as they stood before me, absorbed in their first greetings. How perfectly fitted they were for each other, the graceful, delicate, intellectual-looking girl and the handsome youth with his finely-poised head and gallant bearing!—Max and Thekla embodied in the flesh and blood of this nineteenth century. Yet a sterner despot than even was Wallenstein presided over the fate of these young lovers, —the hard-hearted tyrant Poverty. Like Wallenstein his fiat had gone forth, and spoke in one word the inexorable doom,—"Part!"

Yet even as these thoughts darted swiftly through my brain I put them aside. For the moment at least I would forget all care and caution and let the young things be happy.

"Well, George," I said as lightly as I could, "to what cause do I owe the pleasure of a visit from you this morning? Have you received an order for a new picture, or is your Shakspeare Alphabet accepted, or have you written another act of 'Lady Jane Grey,' or——"

"Or some new scheme more wonderful than all the rest and rather more impracticable? No, no, Aunt Jane, you have not guessed rightly for once at least. I have come to ask you—and Miss Ursula too, if she would care to go—to come with me to visit a very remarkable work that is shortly to be sent to the United States."

He then briefly described the work in question. It was a panorama, painted by an American artist

who was emulous of the fame and fortune won by M. Philippoteaux by his wonderful picture of the Siege of Paris, which for years past has been on exhibition in the round building opposite to the upper end of the Palais de l'Industrie. He had chosen to paint Paris as viewed from the Captive Balloon and had succeeded—at least so George said—in producing a very striking and well-executed picture. It was nearly finished, and was to be shipped to the United States in the course of a few weeks. The artist, Mr. Rogers, was an old friend of George's, and had begged him to bring me to see the panorama before it was taken down and packed, so that I might say a word or two about it in the "Daily Postal Card" and the other American papers for which I wrote. I sighed and looked out at the hot court-yard, feeling that my little shaded parlor was my only safe refuge for the moment.

"George, it is intensely warm, and, moreover, there is going to be a storm. I feel it in the air."

"But I have a carriage waiting below, and you will not be heated or fatigued in the least."

"And where is this wonderful picture?"

"Well, I must confess that it is pretty far from here,—a good distance on the other side of the Seine in fact. But do come, Aunt Jane. Rogers is such a good fellow, and he is so desirous of having his work properly spoken of in the papers."

"That I must make a sacrifice of myself accordingly,—is that it? Well, I suppose that such is the duty of us middle-aged people where you young things are concerned, so I'll e'en go and put on

my bonnet forthwith. Ursula, would you like to go?"

"Of all things. I will get my hat at once."

So, five minutes later saw us all installed in the carriage and jogging along over the stones to our place of destination. George and Ursula, glad of finding themselves together, laughed and chatted gayly, unheeding the heat, which was, indeed, oppressive. The weather had changed since morning, and the heavens wore a sullen and sinister aspect. Not a breath of air was stirring. To the westward a mass of black clouds loomed duskily above the horizon and seemed to be climbing slowly towards the zenith. The Arc de Triomphe, against that ink-black mass, showed white and ghost-like, and its martial groups had fitful changes of expression under the changing lights that gave them an aspect of weird foreboding. Yet the storm, slowly as they generally come up in Paris, seemed to be still far away, and I hoped that long ere its arrival we should be safe at home again.

The distance was even greater than George had led us to suppose. We rode and rode and rode, leaving behind us the Seine with its bridges, the tangled streets and avenues of the Faubourg St. Germain, and even that newer region that lies back of the garden of the Luxembourg. Black lines of railroad crossed our path. The white serried masses of well-built and lofty houses that border the Rue d'Assas and its kindred streets were exchanged for shabby little one-storied shanties, with here and there a board-yard or a tract of waste

ground to enliven the scene. And ever the heat grew more oppressive, and the dull stillness of the atmosphere more ominous, and the clouds climbed higher and higher. But as yet neither waft of wind nor raindrop announced the arrival of the tempest.

The carriage finally halted in front of what was evidently a building lot of imposing dimensions, rising high above the level of the street, which had apparently been but lately laid out. A rough wooden paling surrounded the lot. In the centre of the enclosure towered a huge wooden building, circular in shape and full sixty feet in height, and evidently a temporary structure adapted for some special purpose. It was composed, as I afterwards learned on inspection, of planks nailed to lofty poles, these last resembling in height and dimensions the telegraph-poles of our native land. Guided by George we entered the enclosure, and found ourselves speedily admitted to the edifice itself. The interior wore a curious aspect. The building was without a roof, save for a sloping ledge projecting about three feet beyond the upper edge of the walls all around, which ledge was intended to protect the panorama itself from the rain. The vast canvas lined the whole of the inner walls in the same manner that the picture of the Siege of Paris is displayed in the structure on the Champs Elysées. In the centre of the edifice stood a small frame structure, roofed in and weather-tight, wherein the artist kept his sketches, paints, brushes, etc., and beside it rose an elevated platform, accessible by a commodious flight of steps, from which

the picture was to be viewed. Workmen were busied on various parts of the picture, for, as I afterwards learned, these great panoramas are not painted by the designer of the work himself, but by a corps of trained but inferior artists acting under his direction, who copy his sketches, enlarging them to the required dimensions as they work.

Mr. Rogers came out from his storehouse to greet us. He was a grave and gentlemanly personage, who received us with all due civility, and set to work at once to point out to us the best "bits" and most striking views in the picture. We were conducted in a body to the high platform, and there could rightly judge of the merits of the work. It was very beautiful, and the striking points of the widely-extended view of the great city as seen from the car of the Captive Balloon had been most effectively seized. The Seine winding like a silver ribbon under its myriad bridges, the close-planted avenue of the Champs Elysées, the public buildings and monuments diminished to dainty toys just fit for an étagère by the height at which we were supposed to stand, and the great sea of buildings stretching off to the east, which show that we dwellers in Paris know nothing beyond its western border merely, had all been intelligently observed and reproduced. Mr. Rogers told us that it was his intention to fit up the centre of the hall devoted to the use of the spectators to represent as nearly as possible the car of the balloon, and so to carry out the illusion of the scene.

We were so much interested in finding out fav-

orite and well-known haunts, and in tracing the course of familiar streets, as well as in admiring the faithful and artistic execution of the work, that time and the weather were alike forgotten. It was not till a sudden obscurity swept across the sky and a few great drops of rain began to fall that any of us remembered the threatened storm. Mr. Rogers conducted us at once to his little storehouse to take shelter, and produced for our amusement whole portfolios of drawings and photographs, the art-notes, so to speak, of the great enterprise. In these George and Ursula speedily became absorbed, but my interest was soon diverted from them to the storm that was by that time raging outside. The rain had commenced to fall in perfect torrents, and it dashed upon the roof and walls of our frail shelter with so much violence that we could hardly hear ourselves speak. The sixty feet of canvas-lined walls that rose around us prevented us from feeling the full force of the wind, but from the little window I noted the strange reddish tinge of the atmosphere and the headlong velocity of the clouds that hurried overhead. Suddenly I became aware of a sound that rose above the wild rattling of the rain on roof and windows and the whistling of the wind, which seemed to grow louder and louder though its force was as yet unfelt; it was a peculiar humming noise like that of a storm-blast amid the sails and cordage of a ship at sea. I noticed too that the vast volume of painted canvas around us swelled and strained fearfully beneath the pressure of the wind, and that the lofty wooden walls were quivering with a vibration

like that of a tense harp-string when started into sound.

"Mr. Rogers," I called to our host, "I scarcely think that we are in safety here. Are you sure that this building can stand the stress of the storm?"

"Oh, yes," he replied, with easy confidence, "it has withstood the weather now for nearly a year. Besides, see how it is raining. You and Miss Vane would both be drenched before——"

A loud sound, unmistakable and startling in its character, interrupted his speech and sent us flying to the door of the little storehouse,—the sharp cracking of splitting timber. We hurried outside, just in time to see the lofty wooden walls around us yield to the force of the tempest. They swayed and tottered for one fearful moment, and then parted in a huge fan-shaped fissure that widened into crashing ruin. We rushed towards the door by which we had entered, but a rain of loosened planks, thick as the fall of autumnal leaves, barred our progress. One fell in front of me, grazing my dress in its descent. Another struck Ursula on the shoulder, just grazing her temple. Bewildered by the crashing timber and rushing rain, wild with the very extremity of our peril, we paused horror-stricken for a moment. The next, George, catching Ursula in his arms, hurried breathless towards the breach in the walls, signing to me to follow. Amid the pouring rain and the descending beams, blinded, stunned, and confused, we made our way at last into the open space beyond the building. Just as we did so a furious gust swept past us and smote the quivering

poles and flapping canvas, bearing into total and irretrievable ruin the frail yet gigantic structure, and the huge painting that represented so many brilliant hopes and so many days and nights of patient toil. Down with a crash it fell into a mass of shapeless, shattered ruin. And over the tattered remnants of what had so lately been a noble picture, over the prostrate poles and scattered planks of the wrecked edifice, rushed the pitiless storm as though exulting in the ruin it had wrought, and the wind as it howled overhead had accents of cruel rejoicing for its victory. And we, standing drenched with the rain and shaking with the horror of that vision of sudden death, could hardly find thought or words wherein to frame a thanksgiving to Heaven for our preservation.

A cry from George startled me. I looked around and beheld Ursula in the act of sinking senseless to the ground, where she would have fallen prostrate had not George started forward and caught her in his arms. She looked like death itself. Her small hat had fallen off, revealing the drenched masses of her dark, dishevelled hair. Framed in that dusky setting, her face showed of a corpse-like pallor. On her brow a long, grazed wound, inflicted by one of the falling planks, and from which the blood was just starting, added to the ghastliness of her aspect. And clasping her to his heart, George rained frenzied kisses on her pallid lips, calling her his life, his love, his own, and imploring her wildly to look at him,—to speak to him,—only a word to show that she still lived.

"George, this is madness!" I said, in as stern a tone as my agitation would permit me to assume. "Ursula is not dead, neither is she dying. She has only fainted from exhaustion and terror. Help me to get her to the carriage,—we must return home as fast as possible."

Without a word he obeyed. He raised her in his arms and bore her to the carriage, which had been stationed just around the nearest corner. The cabman was unfeignedly glad to see us, having evidently imagined that his chances of receiving his fare had been wrecked by the total annihilation of the entire party. Just as we had succeeded in placing the still insensible Ursula in a comfortable position on the seat of the vehicle, Mr. Rogers came up to inquire after our welfare. A few words reassured him as to the general well-doing of the party.

"And you," I said, looking with keen sympathy on the pale yet steadfast countenance of the toiling artist over whose ruined work the wind and the rain were holding high carnival, "you are unhurt, and yet——"

"No lives have been lost," he interrupted me quickly, "and no one has been seriously injured. That much I have ascertained already. As for the work,—I can begin it again, and *I will.*"

And the last glance that I turned towards the spot as the carriage jolted heavily away showed him looking at the wreck with the aspect, not of one who despairs, but of one who has resolved to conquer Fate.

CHAPTER XI.

"LOVE SMOTE THE CHORD OF SELF."

WELL, Ursula is none the worse for our expedition of the other day and its disastrous termination. It is true that she only revived from the long and death-like swoon in which she lay for over an hour to fall into a series of hysterical attacks, that lasted so long that medical aid was requisite to subdue them. But the skill of our good Dr. Warner soon set all that to rights, and after a long and refreshing slumber, procured by a sleeping draught of his prescribing, she awoke composed and tranquil, and only suffering from a violent headache caused by the blow that she had received upon her forehead. Even that has disappeared within the last few days, and her vigorous young frame shows no further traces of the shock, and the terror, and the drenching endured in our late momentous expedition. But, during her brief illness, the anxiety manifested by George Brandon would have led any one to suppose that her life or at least her reason was in peril.

What will be the end of it all? Heaven only knows. I have conjured the danger for a time by an appeal to George himself. He came over to see me the day following that of the accident, looking like a ghost. I strongly suspect that he had passed the night in prowling about the neighborhood of

Madame Magne's, and in watching the light in the window of Ursula's bedroom, for he looked pale and haggard, and the hand that clasped mine was as cold as ice.

"How is she,—Miss Vane?" was his first query.

"Very much better,—nearly as well as ever, in fact."

"Thank God for that!" The words burst with irrepressible fervor from his lips. "If you only knew what I suffered when I saw her lying before me, white, breathless, lifeless,—I thought I saw the seal of death set upon her features, and in that moment life itself seemed no longer worth the living. Yes, you know my secret now,—you must have guessed it long ere this. I love her,—love her madly—devotedly,—my whole existence is hereafter hers to make or mar as she will. Tell me,—tell me frankly, dear friend,—do you think she can ever be won to care for me?"

"Alas, yes, my boy. I think that she loves you already."

"Why do you speak then in so regretful a tone? When can I see her? May I not write her just a line—— Ah, if she loves me, what matters aught else to me in all this world? My Ursula,—for her dear sake I will be strong to work and to suffer if need be, if but it be for her,—my darling—my own!"

I drew the eager, excited young lover to my side. "Sit down here, George," I said, "and let us talk about the future. Now, what is it that you propose to do?"

"I mean to declare my love to Ursula as soon as she is well enough to listen to me."

"And if she loves you in return,—what then?"

"What then? We shall be happy in the knowledge of our mutual attachment, and when I have shaped out for myself a position we will be married. We both have simple tastes and can be satisfied with little. We will take a small apartment in the artists' quarter, and you shall help me to fit it up for my wife;—my *wife*,—Ursula!" he repeated, lingering with loving tenderness upon the words.

I looked upon him sadly as he spoke. My young eaglet whose pinion has been broken by the very hands that should have shielded you from harm, how will you ever contrive to escape from poverty's cruel toils? Genius is not a two-edged sword; it smites but in the fashion that Nature has welded it, and he who would fight Life's battle to a successful issue must be free to wield the God-given weapon after the fashion prescribed by its shaping. Shut out from all possibility of embracing a dramatic career, George goes forth to the struggle of life not only unarmed, but, what is worse, encumbered with the shattered fragments of what might have been the weapon of a conqueror.

"And how, my boy, do you intend to gain this wished-for position? Remember that you, who are as yet scarcely able to support yourself, must be able to support a wife before you can venture to marry."

"It will come,—it will come!" he answered, with the unreasoning fervor of youth. "If Ursula only

loves me, you will see how I shall toil to make a home for her. I shall set about a picture for the Salon at once. I will finish 'Lady Jane Grey' and send it to a New York manager. The vague idea of one day winning her has already spurred me into renewed and ardent endeavor, and with the certainty of her love warm at my heart, and with the hope of one day calling her my own before me, I shall strive as never man before me has striven. I will do what no man before me has ever done. I will win Success, be it ever so far above my reach, for success means Ursula and perfect happiness with her!"

I gazed into the bright, earnest face, into the blue eyes glowing with the blended fervor of youth and love, and my heart grew sad within me. How often since the world was young have not the sun and stars looked down on just such ardent hopes, and shone with pitiless lustre on their slow extinguishing amid the dust and ashes of fruitless endeavor and of final despair!

"George, you tell me that you love Ursula. How well do you love her?"

"More than life itself!"

"You must love her even more than that. You must set her happiness, her peace of mind, beyond your own. You must love her better than your love."

"I do not understand——"

"Nay, listen to me. Marriage, or even a betrothal at this moment, were but to bring sorrow upon you both. You, who strive hard now for a bare and

uncertain pittance, can you bring yourself to cloud Ursula's young life, to drag her down to share your privations, or else to fetter her in the wearing chains of a long engagement? I beg of you—I implore of you—do not declare your love to her as yet."

"And yet," he cried, passionately, "I can bring to her life, poor as I am, one boon that it has never yet known."

"And that boon is——?"

"Love! Who yet on earth has ever loved her, save only you and I?"

"My boy, I know it. And yet I plead to you to keep silence, at least for a time. Leave Ursula's as yet unawakened heart to guard your image in its inmost depths, but with an unconfessed and half-unconscious devotion. Do you go forth like the knights of old to seek your fortune. And when you have won, not wealth and fame it may be, but a modest independence and a home, however simple yet secure, then come to woo your bride, and I will be the first to wish you God-speed."

"Dear friend, if she indeed loves me, how can I wait before winning a full confession from her own dear lips?"

"Ah, George, learn strength of forbearance from the very magnitude of your love! See, I plead to one of my dear adopted children for the happiness of the other. Wait—only wait. Leave me to guard your treasure for you while you seek for means to win it. Or else, it may be that Ursula's own needs may call you to her side. If she does indeed adopt

the stage as a profession, as she now declares her intention of doing, a husband's care and protection, should she succeed, will be requisite beyond any other aid in her chosen career."

He flushed crimson. "I could not let my wife support me, were she ever so gifted and so successful an actress," he said, quickly.

"What if she needed you,—what if her life were left full of cares and trials for lack of your love and protection? Would any false delicacy then interfere to prevent you from bestowing them upon her? Nay, that were to sacrifice the woman that you love to a selfish and morbid sentimentality! But at least, leave my darling heart-whole and fancy-free while you go forth to fight the battle of life on her behalf, and while she is shaping out her own chosen work."

He sighed deeply. "It is very hard," he said. "You have laid upon me a sore trial."

"Courage! It is for *her* sake, and that should make all things easy. And now set to work at once to find some opening for your talents and your energies. Set firm your foot upon your toilsome pathway, and journey onward with a brave heart, for Ursula and happiness, as you yourself have said, are waiting you at the journey's end."

"I will obey you,—you are right." He bent over and pressed his lips upon my cheek as he spoke. "The pain of parting is sharp, but I will spend no more time in dallying here. I have had an offer to go to London to make some sketches for one of the leading illustrated papers of Paris. I

will go, and while there I will try to find some permanent employment, either on a newspaper or among the publishers as a designer and illustrator. Failing that——"

He paused suddenly, and an expression of bitter anguish swept across his mobile features.

"And it would have been so easy—I feel the power thrilling in every nerve and fibre—had it not been for my promise. Oh, mother,—mother!"

At that moment the door opened and Ursula entered, still pale and languid from her past suffering. But her pallid cheek was colored by a lovely flush and her eyes brightened with a new lustre when she saw who was my companion. George clasped her proffered hand in both of his own and fixed on her a gaze full of a yearning tenderness beyond all powers of utterance. Her eyes fell beneath that fervent glance, and the soft roses on her cheek deepened into a richer crimson.

"Wish him good-by, Ursula," I said, in as light and cheerful a tone as I could well assume. "He is going out into the world to seek his fortune."

"You are going away, Mr. Brandon?"

Ah, George needed no other assurance of love than was audible in that cry. He hastened to say in a voice still hoarse with his recent emotion, "Only for a short time, Miss Ursula, and my journey for the present will extend no farther than to London. In the future it may be—who knows?—that I may have to seek that indiscoverable fortune in far-distant lands. But for the present I will not say good-by, but only *au revoir*."

He raised her hand to his lips, kissed it once, twice, and thrice passionately, and was gone.

Has she understood the mute language of his eyes, the silent pressure of his lips upon her hand? I think she does, for despite the fact that she suffers visibly from his absence she neither droops nor pines. She is studying hard at her art, and M. Tellier is charmed with her progress. Moreover, she is committing to memory some of the leading rôles of the British drama, her favorite being "Julia" in the *Hunchback*. "Pauline" in the *Lady of Lyons* she does not much affect, because, as she says, "she let Claude leave her." As to Shakspeare, I think her reverence for the mighty master causes her to hold aloof from his creations. But the character that seems most to allure her in the higher walks of the drama is Schiller's Thekla. Is it the likeness between her own fate and that of this more intellectual and nobler German Juliet that so attracts her, for truly their destinies bear many points of resemblance,—the loveless life, the unloving father, the lack of all true guardianship or companionship, only the brave woman's heart and brilliant intellect of the girl herself on which to rely? Or is it the likeness that I myself discern between George Brandon and Max Piccolomini,—bright, gay, unreasoning, noble of heart and pure of nature, passionately loving yet of less intellectual force than is the woman loved? I often think so when I see her musing over the pages of my old well-worn Schiller, and murmuring to herself such passages as the exquisite parting scene of the un-

fortunate lovers, or Thekla's song, that divinest utterance of a melancholy foreboding of a woeful fate.

The other day there came from George as a gift to Ursula a very beautiful drawing in water-colors. It represented the mystic Swan-Knight Lohengrin, at the moment that his enchanted bark bears him away from Brabant and from his bride to be hidden for evermore from mortal gaze among the dim shadows of a supernatural realm. The white wings of the swan, poised lightly on the shimmering waters, were touched with the rose-tints of the coming dawn, and its crested head was turned towards the gold-tinged morning mists into which both bark and knight were destined speedily to disappear. Erect and stately stood the hero-form of Lohengrin, the last rays of the waning moon just sinking in the western sky lending a spectral radiance to his silver armor. His vizor was raised, and his face was turned towards the shore, with the yearning gaze of one who leaves behind him in a departure despairing of a return, if not life itself yet that love which is the better part of life. Looking on that picture, one comprehended that it was not Elsa only who had loved and lost, but that the hero-lover sorrowed with an undying grief for the vision of human tenderness and cares and joys from which he was departing, and most of all for the loss of the fair, frail girl, too childish to comprehend him and too weak to trust. The pencil of the artist has lent his own semblance to the features seen beneath the swan-crest. But not into the golden glories of the

morning floats our poor young knight, but rather into the darkness of a night the end of which no one of us can foresee.

For I cannot feel hopeful respecting him or his success in the hard battle that he has gone forth to fight. I can do nothing to aid him,—I can but leave the issue of all this in the hands of an all-wise Providence. Who says that we old maids escape the trials and penalties of maternal love? Here am I, Jane Anson, without kith or kin to claim my love and care, absorbed in my affection and sympathy for two young things whose love-affairs appear to interest nobody in this world except themselves and me. Mr. Vane is absorbed in a portrait that he is painting of the Princess Petrovska (an ugly old Tartar-faced female that he would not look at twice were she not a Princess), and Mrs. Clyde has been troubled with a flushed face of late, and is so sure that she is on the verge of an attack of apoplexy that she can think of nothing else. And there is nobody else,—so on me devolves the task of petting Ursula, and of consoling her with unspoken sympathy, and that too of writing a daily letter to George, telling him all about matters and things at the Pension Magne, and especially about what transpires in the third-story front room overlooking the street.

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. BRYAN.

I FEEL sad and forlorn this morning. The skies are gray and the wind is chill. I have finished my writing, and have nothing to do save to sit and meditate, and that way lies unspeakable pain. Ursula has gone with her grandmother to a morning *musicale.* My room has become intolerable to me in its dreary loneliness. I want my books,—I want to look up a vexed passage in Froude, to verify a quotation from Thackeray's "Newcomes," to read Macaulay's description of the Battle of the Boyne, and Motley's story of the destruction of the Armada. My books,—my books,—into whatever hands you have fallen, may they caress you with loving touches as I used to do, delighting in your adornment as in your printed pages, and finding endless amusement in arranging, cataloguing, and examining my treasures, and enriching them with inserted prints and autographs!

> "Old friends, old friends, you ne'er deserted me,
> 'Twas I that drove you forth!"

I turn over some of the few volumes on the small *étagère* that graces the corner of my parlor, but the nutriment afforded by that scant supply has been exhausted long ago, save what lies between

the covers of my one-volume Shakspeare. I take up my worn little copy of Longfellow's poems, and my eyes rest upon the lines—

> "How sublime a thing it is
> To suffer and be strong!"

Ah, poet, graceful, gentle, and well-beloved. your tuneful science went astray when you penned that passage! Why is mental suffering more sublime than physical? It is a pain from which we cannot escape, and for which the most stoical of martyrs would fain find a remedy. The suffering of self-sacrifice is heroic, a painful duty steadfastly performed is grand. But enforced and involuntary mental anguish,—is it any more elevating or noble than bodily pain of the same nature? Is rheumatism sublime? or the toothache glorious? or a neuralgic headache ennobling in its effects? I wonder if a criminal when released from the rack felt any greater for the torture he had undergone? If he had borne it for conscience' sake—yes; but then it was the motive of his agony and not the pang itself wherein lay sublimity. I who have suffered, and still suffer,—would I not find a remedy if I could? would I not gladly escape out of the purgatory of penury back to the old paradise of ease and affluence? Away with my books,—"Grief is greater than them all."

I do not believe that adversity has corrected in me a single fault or added to my nature a single good quality. People are not changed by their circumstances any more than a decanter is changed

by the wine that is poured into it. The background reveals defects and heightens peculiarities,—that is all. The person who is selfish and arrogant in prosperity, or malicious and meanly envious in poverty, would have just the same qualifications under other circumstances, as the decanter aforesaid may have a crack that does not leak so long as it remains empty. Only envy is not brought prominently forward in a wealthy person, for instance, and a poor one has not such a good opportunity for a display of pride or selfishness. Some people are fitted by nature to be poor,—many a penurious and execrated millionnaire would have shone as a model of all the virtues as an economical and thrifty mechanic. Others were intended by nature to be rich, as witness George Brandon, who delights in giving, and is never so happy as when he can do something for a friend, or invite some struggling fellow-artist, as poor as he is himself, to share any unusual luxury that may chance to fall in his way. Ah, my poor George! he is far enough from us now. I cannot bear to picture him to my mind as dwelling alone in that great, dark, dreary London, and Ursula's pale cheek and involuntary sighs fill my heart with a vague and oppressive misery.

But I must not sit dreaming here. Gray and stormy as the weather is without, it is more agreeable than is the company of my own thoughts. Besides, I will take heart of grace and try to dispel these gloomy ideas by bright and cheerful companionship. I will wrap myself in my second-best shawl and sally forth to pass a pleasant hour with Mrs.

Upton. H'm-m-m!—is not this the morning that Madame Leponge said she was coming to breakfast with her? Now, I love Mrs. Upton, but I love not Madame Leponge. She is a widow lady of an uncertain age. By her own declaring she is but thirty, but, marry, by her wrinkles I'll swear that she is forty-five. Trim and well made is she, and she makes the most of a slender well-poised figure, but middle age is written all over her face in unmistakable lines. Like myself she is not wealthy, and she lives at a boarding-house, but there the parallel ends; for though I grumble about the discomforts of my den, I never can contrive to mend my fare by inviting myself out to breakfasts and dinners, or my amusements by dropping in just as the carriage is ordered and proposing myself as a companion in the drive, or by asking point-blank for a seat in an opera-box or a ticket to the theatre. Madame Leponge leads a much more jolly life than I do by indulging in such proceedings, and yet I cannot imitate her. The old instincts of the ladyhood that I did not lose in losing my property are stronger than my needs. Neither could I bring myself to go about Paris as she does with a painted perfumed popinjay like her friend M. Del Giglio, who is studying for the stage, and whose real name is Stokes. Did I not see him escorting her at the last fancy-ball given by the Goldenhearts? she arrayed as a shepherdess with the shortest of petticoats and the shadiest of hats, under which the wrinkles showed more strikingly than ever, and he in a costume mainly composed of a suit of silk

tights and a pleasant smile,—"Adam before the Fall" as somebody plaintively suggested. To be sure there was a very little bit of a silk tunic added, but it was like the wet-nurse's baby in Marryat's "Midshipman Easy,"—it was so *very* small that it counted for nothing. In fact, Madame Leponge and I are decidedly not congenial.

Why did I not think of it sooner?—I'll go and see Mrs. Bryan, who returned to Paris from her trip to Brussels three days ago I am told. Madame Leponge, who has a school-girl fondness for nick-names, arising probably from the playfulness of youth, and who is no respecter of persons, has christened the fair and dignified lady in question "Briny!" I could find a better *nom de caresse* for her than that I think, but her own name brings up such pleasant visions of unfailing kindness and thoughtful goodness that I cannot find in all the world a sweeter title for her than just Marie Louise Bryan.

"Madame is within" I learn when I reach the superb hotel on the Rue de Tilsitt, and presently I am ushered into the cosy boudoir that keeps warm and sacred within its precincts the hallowed idea of home, the soul of this lordly dwelling, as a splendid oak with wide-reaching boughs and luxuriant foliage may shelter in the very heart of its verdure a soft nest with its pearly eggs or warmly sheltered brood. For, of all the legends that malice, envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness that the public has accepted concerning Mrs. Bryan, there is indeed one that has some foundation in truth, and that is the

one that represents her as loving her home and her children somewhat too well for her perfect realization of the type of a woman of the world. Only her intimate friends are admitted to this pretty sanctum, with its large arm-chairs, inviting chat by the essence of repose and comfort, its tastefully chosen ornaments, and its general air of home. Beyond the draped doorways on one side are situated the bedrooms, three in number, where the fair mother lies down to rest among her children, the young daughter of the household, Viola Bryan, occupying the room on one side with her governess, and the two noble boys with their nurse having the other. Then on the other side of the boudoir is the dining-room, the suite of apartments being complete in itself. Society has the vast drawing-rooms, the antique Gobelin tapestries, the massive silver service in Renaissance-patterned repousée work behind the ebony and crystal doors that shut in its splendors, the Pompeian dining-room and smoking-room on the first floor, the long suites in glimmering azure or palest rose color, with walls panelled with satin or brocade, but it seldom penetrates to these guarded rooms wherein Mrs. Bryan is so truly at home.

She comes in, flushed and sparkling, from a romp with her two boys, who esteem no privilege more highly than that of a game of play with their lovely young mother. "I am fairly worn out!" she cries merrily, as she throws herself into one of the large arm-chairs. "Just fancy,—my little Harry woke me up at half-past six this morning to tell him stories, and of course there was no more sleep for me.

Then the American Minister and his wife dine here to-day, and I wished to surprise them with a national dish, so I have been busy for the past hour in making some apple-dumplings, greatly to the horror of my *chef*, who evidently thought my proceedings sadly undignified. Then I have been practising a new song for my music-teacher, Signor Castelli,—one of his own composition,—a setting of those exquisite verses by Sully Prudhomme, 'Le Vase Brisé.' You must translate it for me some day. You see I have been far from idle this morning. And now, what have you been doing of late, and how is Miss Vane? none the worse, I hope, for her recent fright?"

The talk drifts into ordinary channels, and I sit there dimly conscious of a pervading peace and rest, as one long chilled in a gloomy cave might feel on creeping forth into the sunlight of noonday. I love to realize amid my own desolation the perfect completeness of this dear lady's lot, and to feel as I look at her that even my affection can hardly crave a new blessing for her. And after a while she goes to the piano and pours out the sweet and sympathetic notes of her voice in the melody that has transfused into music the pathos of those charming verses by Sully Prudhomme, "The Broken Vase," whereof she had just spoken, and whereof the following is but a feeble translation:

The vase, where yon verbena dies,
  Was riven by a careless fan.
'Twas but a touch, and naught was heard
  To tell when first the harm began.

Yet the slight rift from day to day
  Gnawing the crystal without sound,
Has journeyed surely and unseen,
  And circled all the vase around.

Its waters, drop by drop, have fled,
  Its flow'rs droop withered and forgot.
None the disaster yet suspects,
  Lo, it is broken,—touch it not!

Thus often smites a hand belov'd
  The tender heart it could not prize,
Then of itself the heart is rent,
  And Love, its flower, droops and dies.

Ever intact before the world,
  No sound is heard, no word is spoken,
It feels the slight wound grow and weep,
  Ah, touch it not, for it is broken!

Hardly had the sweet wailing melody sighed itself into silence than a servant, who was waiting at the door, came forward to present to Mrs. Bryan a letter as she rose from the piano. She took it and opened it, and after glancing over the lines she dismissed the servant with a quiet, "No answer." Then, with a smile half playful and half rueful, she turned the open page towards me. The missive set forth how one Manuel Mora, a Spaniard, wished to return to his home in Cuba, but being penniless he took the liberty of requesting the wealthy Mrs. Bryan to give him the trifling sum of five thousand francs wherewith to purchase his outfit for the voyage and to pay his passage. The bearer would wait below for an answer, which he had no doubt would be favorable, from all that he had heard

respecting the generosity and the riches of Mrs. Bryan.

"Rather a cool demand," I remarked, as I gave her back the letter. "Do you know anything whatever respecting the writer?"

"Nothing at all, and you see he has not even the claim upon me of being a fellow-countryman."

"And he is not modest in respect to the size of his demand," I said, glancing again at the letter. "A thousand dollars is rather a large amount. Does he fancy that even the wealthiest of American ladies can give away such a sum to a total stranger as coolly as she might a handful of pence to a beggar?"

"And just remember that these calls upon me are continuous and unceasing. Sometimes I receive as many as five and six letters of that nature in a single day. Sometimes a Frenchman will write me word that he is in desperate need of fifty thousand francs, and if it is not instantly accorded to him he will either drown himself in the Seine or else jump off of the Arc de Triomphe. Or else I get a letter in a woman's hand, declaring that she is in despair for want of five thousand dollars, and that she will be driven to a life of shame if she does not get it. I caused some two or three of these cases to be investigated by the police, but as they invariably proved to be swindles, I now let them pass by unheeded. But these letters used to make me very unhappy at first. I used to cry myself to sleep at night fancying I saw my wretched correspondents struggling in the cold waters of the Seine or dashed to pieces on the pavement of

the Champs Elysées. But I have found out so many attempts to impose upon me that I am getting much more hard-hearted. Of course I am very glad to subscribe to any laudable charity, or to help any deserving persons who are really in need. But it would take the purse of Fortunatus to supply all the demands that are daily made upon me."

"Do they often ask you for such large amounts as your petitioner of to-day has done?"

"Indeed, his request, as compared with those of some others, is quite reasonable. One day I went to call on the Princess of Gallicia, and she told me of a very admirable English governess who much desired a letter of introduction to me, she having formerly taught the Princess's youngest daughters. So, as I required an English teacher for my daughter, I said I would be very happy to see the lady. The next day she came; a very lady-like, middle-aged person, who seemed to be just the governess that I wanted for Viola. So after the usual greetings I began to inquire into her method of tuition, etc. 'Ah, madam,' she replied, 'I have not come to you to seek a situation; my mission is of a far different character. You must know that I and my brother are the sole survivors of a noble family. We possess a handsome estate in the north of England. Unfortunately it is heavily encumbered with mortgages, so that we derive no revenue from it. Were these mortgages paid off my brother and I could live in affluence, and hearing of your immense wealth and your great generosity, I thought I would apply to you for the necessary amount. It would be

but as a drop in the ocean to you,—it is only one hundred thousand dollars,—twenty thousand pounds.' I told her that I could not entertain such a proposition for a single moment. 'Then you give me no hope?' she said, rising. 'I regret to say that I can give you no hope whatever.' And away she went, evidently highly indignant at my heartless penuriousness."

"That was 'a little strong,' as our French friends say."

"Then I had another adventure of the same kind a few weeks ago, which was almost as extraordinary. The card of a gentleman purporting to be the Consul of one of the South American Republics, at Rouen, was brought in to me on my reception-day. I gave orders to have him admitted, for, as I am introduced to so many of these foreign officials at the French Ministerial balls, I am never quite sure as to whether I know them or not. The gentleman entered, very handsome and elegant-looking, extremely well dressed, and wearing a superb ruby as a scarf-pin. As it was a stormy day there chanced to be no other visitors present, so he plunged at once into business. As usual he began with a preamble respecting my vast wealth and my well-known generosity, and then he proceeded to state his case. He was, he said, engaged to be married to a young French lady. He had purchased some valuable jewels, which he had presented to his betrothed, and when the bill came due for these costly ornaments he was unable to pay for them. So in that dilemma he had applied to me. Would I kindly loan him

for a few weeks the sum of three hundred thousand francs.* I quietly refused, remarking that the best advice that I could give him would be that he should tell the true state of the case to his lady-love, and get her to give him back the jewels in question, so that he could return them to their lawful owners. With many thanks for my kind advice, and a profusion of bows and apologies, he departed. The next day I received a letter from him. He stated that, being deeply touched by my goodness in receiving and advising him, he wished to show his gratitude in some way. He understood that I had a young unmarried sister. He knew of a young gentleman who had a fortune of eight millions and was a Count into the bargain. This wealthy and titled gentleman had commissioned my South American friend to seek for a wife for him, so in gratitude for my goodness he would accord the preference to my sister, and would wait below for my answer. Which answer he got in the shape of a request to leave my house. I afterwards heard of the arrest of this accomplished gentleman for obtaining goods under false pretences, as he was no South American Consul at all, but an impostor and a swindler."

"I am glad," I remarked, "that neither of these modest applicants were Americans."

"Yet demands from my own country-people are not lacking, and though less extensive are occasionally positively insulting. One man, for instance, wrote to me from the West that if I did not instantly

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* Sixty thousand dollars.

send him money enough to buy a farm, he would invent some story of a debt that I owed him, write it on postal cards, and send one of these cards to each of the friends that I have in Paris. Of course I took no notice of the threat, and I presume he has given up his intention of executing it, as the postal cards have not yet begun to arrive. Then, on another occasion, a very refined-looking American, who gave her name as Mrs. Greyson, came to see me, and told me a piteous tale of her sufferings: her furniture seized, her children starving, and she herself almost fainting for want of proper food. I gave her quite a large sum of money, being moved to compassion by her recital. The next day I was driving in the Bois de Boulogne, when who should I meet but Mrs. Greyson in a two-horse landau, wearing a new bonnet and the freshest possible six-button gloves in pale-yellow kid."

"I wonder that you were never warned about the Greysons. They are the licensed mendicants of the American colony, and have lived for years on the contributions of the charitable. The father is a fine-looking old man with a long white beard and white hair, and has contrived at different times to collect large sums of money, thanks to his venerable appearance. He is generally on the point of being paid several hundred thousand dollars by the promoters of some great enterprise or other (of late it has been the Isthmus of Panama Canal), and only wants a few hundred francs for the immediate wants of his starving family (they are always starving) and to keep his credit unimpaired till

this large fortune is paid over to him. But really, it seems to me that many of these demands are very much like the highwayman's of old,—your money or your life."

"Positively, they almost reach that point sometimes in literal earnest. I have had persons lie in wait for me at the door, and almost tear my shawl or mantle off of me in their persistent assaults on my compassion and my purse."

"Which nearly took the form of assault and battery."

"Exactly. Then the other day a French Countess, whom I did not know at all, walked into my drawing-room and coolly asked me to let her have my rooms to hold a fancy fair in. She was very indignant when I told her that it would seriously inconvenience me to give up my salons for a week, and that consequently I could not grant her request. I sometimes feel as though I would never do a charitable action again,—never!"

"My dear, you could not help it if you tried. *C'est plus forte 'que vous!* Only the other day did I not hear of a copy of a picture in the Louvre purchased from a starving country-woman, and paid for with a bank-note of a thousand francs,—and so delicately was the whole transaction managed that pride itself could take no offence? Do you not remember the pretty legend of the angel that went from house to house in a great city, invisible and noiseless, his presence only revealed by the flower of Paradise that he left behind him, and whose scent was potent to cure all earthly ills? You are

very like the angel,—you pass and leave the heaven-born perfume of charity behind you to betray your vanished presence."

She blushed like a girl receiving her first German favor at her first ball. "I thought that the story about the picture——"

"Would never be told. But you see, even though that soft left hand of yours is never suffered to know what its right-hand comrade is doing, there are eyes to find out, ay, and tongues to denounce you, madam, as a naughty impostor,—a Sister of Charity masquerading in lace and diamonds,—a gentle Providence wearing the disguise of a woman of the world."

She laughed and changed the subject. For there are two forms of conversation to which Mrs. Bryan will never listen,—her own praises or a word of thanks for any one of her many kindly deeds. She took from the table a very beautiful miniature of her young sister, the newly-wedded Countess Teora, and asked me if I thought it was a good likeness.

"I thought at one time," she remarked, "that Adela never would marry, she was so resolved never to listen to proposals from any man whom she could not love and who did not love *her*. And Count Teora (despite his title, you staunch Republican you!) is as devoted a husband as though he had been born under the Stars and Stripes instead of the red, white, and green banner of Italy. The match was one of strong mutual affection,—that only true basis for wedded happiness, despite all charitable rumors to the contrary."

"Wealth and a title are no barrier to perfect wedded love, as history abundantly testifies. All the realms attached to the British crown could not hinder the upspringing of true love between Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. Dear, when I have written and spoken against the union of American girls with titled foreigners, it was only against those miserable alliances wherein American gold is paid down to buy a worthless ruined libertine or gambler, merely because he is called Duke, Prince, or Marquis, and has an ounce or so of noble blood in his veins."

"And if you only knew how many such alliances were offered to Adela! The story of the proposals made to her would fill a volume, but of course honor forbids that we should speak of them."

"My dear, you have no need to open your lips upon the subject, for the gentlemen themselves have been largely communicative, and they and their relatives have not hesitated to carry their intentions from house to house through the American colony. Was not the young Duke de Dions among her suitors."

"Yes, but how did you learn——"

"Only listen. The Dowager Duchess called one day on Mrs. Thurston Harding, and asked her if she knew Miss Wallingford. Mrs. Harding responded that she knew the young lady well, and that she was in all respects a most lovely and amiable girl. 'I am charmed to hear you say so, madame,' responded the Duchess. 'My son saw her at the last ball given by the Princess of Gallicia, and immediately

fell violently in love with her. May I ask, Mrs. Harding, if you are a mother?' My friend replied that she had that joy. Then you can appreciate a mother's feelings when the happiness of an only son is in question! Money,' she continued impressively, laying her hand on Mrs. Harding's arm, 'is no object to us. We scorn it,—all I seek for in my son's marriage is mutual affection and the highest qualities of head and heart in the bride. But I am told that Mr. Bryan has announced his intention of bestowing upon his sister-in-law a dowry of two millions of your American dollars. Now that fact has nothing whatever to do with my inclination for the match,—nothing whatever. In fact, we are ready to accept a dowry of one million only!' "

Mrs. Bryan laughed heartily. "My mother had a very simple way of getting rid of these fortune-hunting suitors," she remarked. "She used merely to ask when the offer was made, 'In what manner do you intend to support my daughter?' And when the invariable answer was returned that the gentleman had come to offer his title in exchange for a comfortable income, she would reply that such was not the American fashion of contracting marriages, and that was the end of it. But one day her sense of humor got the better of her, and she could not resist the temptation of playing off a small joke on a certain Marquise who came to open negotiations for Adela's hand on behalf of her son. My mother listened gravely to all the lady's praises of my sister's charms and accomplishments, and

then replied, 'It gives me great pleasure to find my daughter so highly appreciated, for in fact she has no fortune whatever; we are educating her for a governess, and we hope that she will obtain a diploma in a few weeks and be in a position to support herself.' The Marquise's face grew black as night with wrath and disappointment. 'Evidently I have been grossly misinformed,' she remarked angrily, and rising, she swept from the room without even going through the formality of wishing my mother good-morning."

"And your fair young sister might have been a Princess half a dozen times over had she so chosen. Oh, you see that gossip has told more than you imagine,—I have had a long and, I think, a correct list of her suitors, beginning with Prince Christian of Loewenstein-Lichtenthal, Prince Ivanovski, and the Prince d'Ivry, and winding up with Barons and Counts too numerous to mention. And to think of a young lady so wooed ending up at last by making a genuine love-match in the highly unfashionable American style! Mrs. Bryan, I am very much afraid that you and your family are incorrigible Americans. And yet, I have heard it averred in polite society that you had purchased the title of Duchess for a large consideration."

"What nonsense!" And again her sweet, merry laugh rang out in mirthful music. "It is true that only the other day the title-deeds of an estate, bearing with it a patent of nobility, were sent to me for purchase, but I returned the papers unopened. Titles are all very well when they mean something,

that is to say, when they are the appanage of some old and long-descended family, or have been granted by a sovereign in recognition of some great deed or genuine service. But to *buy* a title,—what an absurdity! How could anybody imagine that I would be so foolish?"

"My dear, there are people who delight in attributing to you every piece of folly under the sun. It is from these, and such as these, that come the senseless tales of your wanting to buy the Arc de Triomphe, of your dresses encrusted with precious stones, and such like inventions. You are too fortunate, too prosperous, too happy to suit the ideas of an envious world. But those who know you best are best aware of how utterly without foundation all these silly stories are. I only wish that all the world knew you as I know you,—for one of the sweetest, the most unselfish, the most generous——"

She softly laid her jewelled hand upon my lips, and once again changed the conversation with a smile.

"Do you know, I had such a comical letter concerning Mrs. Professor Spinks the other day? You know she has been untiring in trying to get me to invite her to my entertainments, but I have always resisted every pressure that could be brought to bear upon me to induce me to do so. The other day I got a letter purporting to come from one Susan Harris, of Washington, who set forth at length how she had brought letters of introduction to me from half the Senators and Representatives in Congress assembled, but that on arriving in Paris

she would not present them, because she found that I was no friend to her dear friend 'Egeria,' otherwise known as Mrs. Professor Spinks, 'Egeria' being her *nom de plume* as a correspondent. This state of affairs saddened her very much, because Egeria was such a noble and lovely character, and was, moreover, descended from about two-thirds of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence. And then, too, she was a very great invalid, and a constant sufferer, her physician declaring that life was only kept in her by her seeing her friends occasionally and going out sometimes into society."

"What a remarkable case,—a sick woman who is only kept alive by holding receptions and going to balls! Really, it ought to be brought to the notice of some one of the great medical colleges of Paris. And who is this unknown Susan Harris?"

"I never have heard of her since; and to tell you the truth, I rather fancy that the letter was written by Mrs. Professor Spinks herself."

"Very probably. There is a strong flavor of 'Egeria's' style about it. But it is growing late, and your carriage must be at the door, so *au revoir*."

As I issued from the doorway of the hotel a shabby-genteel individual, draped in a large cloak and showing a pair of fierce black eyes and a bristling moustache under the shade of his broad felt hat, advanced from his station on the other side of the street and tripped lightly up to me.

"Madame Bryan?" he asked, insinuatingly.

"I am not Mrs. Bryan," I answered curtly, and went my way, leaving the writer of the begging letter,

the *soi-disant* Manuel Mora, to prowl up and down before the door awaiting the exit of the lady of the house.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE END OF A VENGEANCE.

"AUNT JANE——"

"What is it, Ursie?"

"I am going to the Bon Marché with my grandmother. Do you not want to go with us?"

"No, little one, my shopping for the season is finished."

"But your brown cloth suit is *very* shabby, and ever since the correspondent of the 'Lakeville Leaflet' ridiculed it in one of his letters I have so disliked seeing you wear it. Will you not get a new cashmere this season,—just to please *me?*"

"No, Ursula, love, not even for that reason. As for my fellow-correspondents, they may laugh at my gowns as much as they like,—they are open to criticism certainly. Now I will let you into a secret. I am spending as little money as possible on my dress, because I want it for another purpose. I am trying to make up a sum sufficient to pay for the furniture of a small apartment. When I have succeeded, I shall go to housekeeping in a cosey little suite of four rooms—bedroom, dining-room, kitchen, and parlor—somewhere in the Latin Quarter, or on one of the side streets not far from

the Boulevards. Perhaps I shall have to get uptown,—away up in the neighborhood of the Arc de Triomphe in fact, in order to find quarters at once cheap and respectable. But when the furniture is once secured I shall soon find the apartment, never fear."

Ursula drew near and looked interested. "How pleasant that will be for you, Aunt Jane," she said regretfully, "but not for me, for I shall miss you sadly! But, oh! I should be so glad too to go to housekeeping again. It is dreadful work to live in a boarding-house, and we *did* have such a pleasant apartment once,—two bedrooms opening out of the studio, and a quaint old dining-room hung with stamped leather, and a drawing-room with all sorts of picturesque furniture,—odd chairs and tables, and a Louis XV. harp with half its strings broken and a garland of flowers painted down its front on a gold ground, and such beautiful old china and bronzes that papa had picked up at the auction sales at the Hôtel Drovot. But after his great disappointment about my grandfather's will he never seemed to care about his home, so one day he sold all his furniture and pretty things and brought us here to live. And now, if you go away and leave me, what in the world shall I do?"

"Well, dear, you need not begin to sorrow for my departure yet awhile, for in all likelihood you will leave Madame Magne's long before I am able to do so. And yet I do so long to get away from all the petty miseries of this boarding-house life and to have a home of my own. Truly, I do not

think I should mourn so constantly over all that I have lost if I were but established in some nook or corner—I care not how small or simple—that would really be my home. I have planned it all out,—the little apartment, with one stout servant-girl to do my work, and just enough furniture for my needs. Ursula, you shall go with me when I go to select my furniture, and you shall help me too to look for an apartment. You see, dear, I can build castles in the air as well as you or George. In my mind's eye I already behold you and myself, climbing innumerable staircases, interviewing countless concierges, and stopping at every doorway where the white placard that tells of unfurnished apartments to let is swinging. Then will come the grave question of a sunny exposure, and the investigations into drains and water-pipes, and such like mysteries. Then will we be called upon to weigh the pros and cons of advantages or defects,—a good entrance against a story lower down, and a steep staircase against extra-sized rooms. Then will come the solemn signing of the lease for three, six, nine——"

"Three, six, nine,—what does that mean, Aunt Jane?"

"Are you not acquainted with that bit of Paris-American slang? That means the number of years for which a Parisian lease is always made out. Then will come the fee to the concierge, and the final installation. And I'll tell you what, Ursula,—you shall come and dine with me the very first evening that I spend in my new home."

"That will be delightful!" And Ursula's great, clear eyes grew larger and deeper at the idea. I could not help laughing, half sadly it must be confessed, at her earnestness.

"Little one, I have heard of counting one's chickens before they were hatched, but hardly before the eggs were even laid. Yet that is what I have been doing just now. Here have I been revelling in the imaginary delights of a possible apartment, when I have not yet got money enough laid aside to furnish two rooms, to say nothing of china, glass, linen, cutlery, etc. Oh, my ideas are not extensive, of that you may be certain. I have had my share of Sèvres porcelain, and Venetian glass, and repoussé work in silver. Now, if I can just get together money enough wherewith to purchase the bare necessaries of a home, I'll be content. But tables, and chairs, and beds, and bedding, and plates, and knives, and forks, and stewpans, and gridirons all cost money, and though I lay aside every cent that I can, it is not possible for me to save very much. For, apart from the expenses of mere existence,—board, and fuel, and washing, and necessary clothes,—I must go to theatres, and concerts, and exhibitions to keep my correspondence on a level with the changing events of the day. And American writers, especially when of the feminine gender, enjoy no press privileges here in Europe."

"But you say that you have saved something already, Aunt Jane."

"Six hundred francs, dear,—no more. Once I had put aside quite a good sum of money, but then

I fell ill and was ordered change of air, and away went my savings in a lump. So you see now why the old brown cloth dress and jacket must do for another season, and you see, too, why I said that you need not begin to lament just yet over my projected departure from Madame Magne's. It has taken me over two years to save up that six hundred francs. At the rate I am progressing now I shall go to house-keeping in about six years from this time. So now run away to Mrs. Clyde,—she must be waiting for you. We have ample time before us to plan out how my parlor shall be furnished."

Ursula laughed, and hastened away to spend some hours in the hopeless task of trying to buy a hundred dollars' worth of goods for a hundred francs.

The room is very quiet now that she is gone,—there is nobody in it but myself and my paroquet, the last in a state of drowsy talkativeness, wherein he keeps repeating at brief intervals, "Cecotte, Cecodette—Qu'elle est mignonne—Oui—oui—oui," and other fragments of his limited repertoire, in a sleepy if somewhat hoarse voice. I turn to my little secretary, and write away busily at an account of the last new dresses produced by Worth, diverging to a description of a new actress at the Gymnase, and winding up with an anecdote concerning Gustave Doré and a rumor of a forthcoming volume by Victor Hugo. Then, my work re-read, corrected, completed, and laid aside, I take from one of the drawers of the secretary a letter, which I unfold and spread open on the desk before me. It has

already undergone careful perusal, but I read it anew with a melancholy interest. It is from George, and runs as follows:

"LONDON, October 29.

"DEAR AUNT JANE,—You must forgive me for not writing to you oftener. The fact is that the postage and the price of stationery pull heavily on my limited means. And yet I hope you will not cease to write to me even though your letters remain unanswered, since hearing about Ursula forms the chief consolation of my life.

"I wish I had some good news to tell you about myself or my prospects, but I have nothing new to add to my last report. I am still employed on the illustrated theatrical paper of which I spoke to you in my later letters, and there is every chance of a continuance of my present engagement. It is so far better than my old hap-hazard way of life in Paris that at least I earn enough to keep soul and body together, and that regularly. But I see no opportunity of future advancement, and my visions of marriage, and happiness, and Ursula are receding farther and farther into the dim distance. And existence here is very miserable. I miss the sunshine and gayety of Paris, its parks and promenades, its atmosphere, which, if murky and overshadowed, is at least free from chilling east winds and blinding fogs. My garret in the Quartier Latin had a cheery look-out, and if I starved, I starved at least among pleasant surroundings. Then too, when I got anything to eat, if it were but a cup of soup, or a lump of bread and a radish, it

was clean and palatable and daintily served. I cannot describe to you the abominations that I swallowed when first I came here. Now I subsist chiefly upon dry bread and boiled eggs—when I can afford the latter delicacy. It is at least easy to cook.

"You ask me about my lodgings and where they are situated. I have one room on the topmost floor of a dingy, tumble-down old building, situated on one of the small streets that open out of the Strand near Charing Cross. The house is dismally dreary, and black, and shabby, but the upper windows look out on the Thames Embankment. And when there is not a fog (which happens sometimes) I enjoy quite an extended view of the shipping and the river, including the Obelisk, which last always makes me homesick for Paris, as it recalls to me so vividly, though with a difference, the one on the Place de la Concorde. There is not much furniture in my room, though I am supposed by courtesy to inhabit furnished lodgings. But I have a chair to sit upon, and a bed to sleep in, and a table at which to write and draw, and what else can a reasonable man require?

"But I am not a reasonable man,—I want something more. Oh, dear Aunt Jane! let me confess it to you at once,—my whole being pines for the presence of Ursula. It seems to me that to look into her face once more, to hold her hand in mine, to say to her I love you, and to hear her confess that she loved me in return, I would be willing the next moment to lay me down and die. My great consolation is

the colored sketch that I made of her as 'Juliet.' I went without my dinner for two days that I might buy a cheap frame to put it in, and it now hangs against my wall, where my eyes can seek it the first thing on my awakening, and the last thing before my light is extinguished at night. You tell me that she is well and is studying busily. Does she seem to miss me at all,—if ever so little? If she only knew how her image fills my heart and pervades my life! But I see now that you were right in holding me back from trying to win from her a full avowal of her affection. Mine alone shall be the wearing pain of disappointment and of hope deferred,—she shall not share their pangs with me. I can find some comfort in the thought that she does not suffer as I do now.

"I have some thoughts of returning to America if I can but amass the necessary funds. What should I do when once there? you will naturally ask. I do not know myself. But surely, when a man has health and strength, and is not a fool, and is willing to work, there must be some career open to him in the New World. And I would be willing to do anything that was honest and decent, if only it promised me a maintenance for the present and a prospect of winning Ursula hereafter.

"Ursula! That name lingers on my lips and on my pen as it dwells forever in my heart. It will be found engraven there when I die, I expect, as wicked old Queen Mary said that the word Calais would be on hers. But it will not do for me to dwell longer on this theme, else I shall be unnerved

and wretched for the remainder of the night; besides, my candle is burning low, and I have still some work to finish. Write to me soon, Aunt Jane, and tell me everything that you can think of about my darling,—perchance never mine in this world, but surely mine hereafter, if patient undying affection can win either recompense or recognition in another sphere.

"Yours as ever,
"GEORGE BRANDON."

I read and re-read these lines, whose tone of patient hopelessness finds a foreboding echo in my own heart. At the sound of hurried steps upon the stairs I fold the letter and conceal it quickly in my pocket, for it may be Ursula who is coming, and its contents are not meant for her eyes. But the footsteps pass on and ascend to a higher story, so I address myself to the task of answering the epistle.

There are some letters that are meant to be read by many more eyes than those to which they are ostensibly addressed. There are others which are sacred to one reader only, and there are many that, through mistakes of the post, or mishaps of a similar nature, are never read at all. And in that latter category must my carefully-studied answer be placed. No shipwrecked missive, soaked to a shapeless wad of pulp by the action of the water, was ever more totally suppressed. I came across the crumpled pages in one of the drawers of my secretary a few weeks later, and smiled over the carefully-balanced

phrases and well-meant words of sympathy, so thoroughly useless and so utterly thrown away. For the letter never was read by him to whom it was addressed,—never reached its destination,—never was so much as posted. Ere the ink in which it was written was dry a series of events had rendered it so much waste paper, a minor effect of the great changes wrought by the general upheaval of all things in our little circle that was so soon to take place.

Let me recall in due order the incidents of that momentous afternoon.

I had nearly finished my letter and was looking for a card photograph of Ursula which I meant to enclose in it, when Mathilde brought me a card on which was inscribed the name of Mr. Morris Matthews, one of the greatest of our Quakeropolis lawyers, and a former friend of my own. I hastened to put aside my writing and made ready to welcome him with very real pleasure. He came in, the same erect, neat, clean-shaven, keen-eyed gentleman as of old, smiling and courteous, a very breath, so to speak, of the life in that vanished home across the sea. A curious vision of social evenings and pleasant dinner-parties rose up before me as I looked upon his face, but I resolutely put all obtrusive memories aside and gave myself up to the pleasure of once again meeting so old and valued a friend. The first salutations exchanged, and the first queries about our mutual acquaintances at home once answered, he looked about him with a preoccupied air.

"I must confess to you, Miss Anson," he said at length, "that my visit to you to-day is not wholly of a social character. I have an important communication to address to a young lady who lives in this boarding-house, and who is, I understand, not at home. Are you acquainted with Miss Ursula Vane, the daughter of Mr. Vane, the artist, and the granddaughter of our late fellow-townsman, Richard Vane?"

Even as he spoke the door opened and Ursula herself entered, still in her walking-dress and with her hands filled with packages.

"Oh, Aunt Jane," she began, in her usual impetuous style, "I have bought——" At that moment she caught sight of my visitor, and stopped short in blushing confusion. I introduced her to Mr. Matthews, who looked at her with admiring and kindly interest.

"So this is Miss Vane, is it?" he said. "My dear young lady, I have some weighty business to transact with you, and perhaps it would be as well if your father were present. I have sent a messenger to his studio to summon him, and I expect him every moment. Shall we retire to your own apartments, or shall the interview take place in the room where we now are?"

"I have no secrets from Aunt Jane—Miss Anson, I mean," replied Ursula, in vague bewilderment, "so perhaps we had best stay here."

"Very good,—and you must not get nervous, Miss Vane. We lawyers are sometimes rather alarming individuals, but we seldom come on so

pleasant a mission as that wherewith I am now charged. I bring you nothing but good tidings," he added, kindly, on noticing her increasing agitation. "Ah, here is Mr. Vane himself!" For at that moment that gentleman entered, looking elegant and imperturbable as ever. After a slight salutation to Mr. Matthews and a word of greeting to his daughter, he turned to me.

"Permit me to apologize to you, Miss Anson, for thus unceremoniously taking possession of your parlor this afternoon. But the fact is that a boarding-house does not afford many opportunities for privacy, and my studio is too public a spot to answer any better. So, if you will kindly suffer us to transact our brief business here, I shall feel obliged."

I hastened to assure him that my parlor was wholly at his disposal for the affair in question, so Mr. Vane took a seat, and the lawyer drew from a green bag, that he had laid aside on entering, a quantity of very formidable-looking papers. Ursula drew closer to me and stole a cold little hand into mine, while I myself looked on with considerable interest.

"Oh, Aunt Jane!" she whispered to me breathlessly, "suppose that somebody has left to me a great deal of money,—as much as ten thousand dollars!"

I was spared the trouble of replying by the lawyer, who, turning to Mr. Vane, said,—

"*You* know, I believe, the purpose of my errand here to-day." Mr. Vane bowed with the air of a

man who sees a draught of physic awaiting his lips, and is rather in a hurry to swallow it and get the unpleasantness of the act over. Then, turning to Ursula, Mr. Matthews continued,—

"You are, Miss Vane, as I believe you know, the sole grandchild and lineal descendant of Mr. Richard Vane, late of the city of Quakeropolis, who died some six years ago, leaving a will whose provisions were remarkable by their singularity. He therein directed that his entire estate, with the exception of a small annuity which was settled on your father, his only son, and which was revokable under certain conditions, should be placed in the charge of the Fidelity Trust Company of Quakeropolis, and the revenues arising therefrom should be suffered to accumulate till a period of six years had elapsed. At the end of that time, a sealed codicil affixed to the will was to be opened by certain specified officers of the Trust Company, and the final disposition of the property was then to be made known. The six years expired something over a fortnight ago, and the sealed paper was opened in accordance with Mr. Vane's directions. By that document, my dear young lady, you become entitled to the possession and enjoyment of all the revenues of your grandfather's large estate, the property itself remaining in trust for the benefit of yourself and your children. Should you refuse the conditions of the bequest or die childless, the money is to be devoted to founding a new branch of the Quakeropolis Public Library, to be situated on the extreme verge of the city's northern limits, and to be called the Vane branch

of the Quakeropolis Library. For a single condition is attached to your acceptance of this noble bequest, and one that cannot fail to be painful to a young lady of your doubtless strong filial affections. It is that in no way or shape, whether directly or indirectly, shall you divide, donate, or in any manner suffer Mr. Stephen Vane, your father, to participate in or enjoy any portion of the income thus bequeathed to you, however small. We regret the existence of this clause in the codicil, but I have no choice but to make it known to you. Do you accept or refuse the estate on those terms?"

"She accepts, of course," said Mr. Vane, with a slight, well-bred sneer upon his features. "Accept, Ursula,—I lay my parental commands on you to do so."

Ursula's lips quivered and turned pale, but she made answer in an audible if trembling voice, "I do accept my grandfather's bequest."

"And you will comply with its conditions?"

"Yes."

Mr. Matthews rose, gathered his papers together, and made preparations to depart. "I see, Mr. Vane," he said, "that you have complied with the conditions on which you are to retain your income, but as a matter of form permit me to put the question to you. Have you maintained strict and inviolate secrecy respecting the ultimate destination of your father's estate, as enjoined to you under penalty of forfeiting the income of one thousand dollars per annum from that estate which you now enjoy?"

Mr. Vane looked bored, but made answer with his usual cold courtesy, "I have preserved the secrecy, as enjoined upon me by my father's letter of instructions, sacred and inviolate. Even my daughter learned nothing from me of the brilliant future awaiting her."

"That is well. Miss Anson, I shall call to-morrow to pay you a special visit,—a friendly one this time, and not one of business. Miss Vane, permit me to congratulate you on your accession of fortune. You are now one of the greatest heiresses in the United States. I shall remain in Paris for a fortnight, and will call in a day or two to regulate all necessary preliminaries and attend to all essential formalities connected with the estate. Mr. Vane, I wish you a good-afternoon." He bowed and was gone. Mr. Vane rose, buttoned his coat, picked up his hat, and made ready to depart.

"You have nothing particular to say to me, Ursula, I suppose. Permit me to join my congratulations to those of Mr. Matthews."

She started up and hurried towards him. "So you knew it all the time!" she cried. "Was *this* the reason why you never loved me,—why you always tried of late years to thrust me aside out of your life?"

He looked down into the pale, agitated face upturned to his own with a glance of cold surprise.

"Naturally, I could not feel very affectionately disposed towards the instrument of my father's vengeance. Yet I have never been unkind to you, I believe."

"No, you have never been unkind, but, oh, father, father! you have never loved me. Had you only cared for me—just a little, if ever so little—I would have flung that money from me as so much dross,—I would have clung to you, worked for you, *died* for you if need were,—I, who have been motherless, and to whom you should have been father and mother both. My grandfather's vengeance recoiled upon me when it poisoned all springs of natural affection in your heart. Can you not care for me even now, or must that wretched money stand between us forever?"

He disengaged his arm from the convulsive clasp of her clinging hands, not roughly, but with a quiet determination that was very repressive even to the agitation of the excited girl. "My dear Ursula," he said, looking at her with disapprobation, "you should not suffer yourself to become so unduly excited. Pray remember that I am not given to either gush or caresses. Henceforth our paths in life will lie far apart, and the sooner we can accustom ourselves to consider that state of things as inevitable the better. I shall leave you with Miss Anson to compose yourself. I thank you for your hospitality of this afternoon, Miss Anson, and trust you will pardon the intrusion on your busy moments."

As the door closed behind him Ursula came flying to my embrace, and burst into an irrepressible passion of tears. "You only have loved me in my poverty," she sobbed, "and now that I am rich, how can I ever trust on any one's affection?"

"I, only, Ursula? Dear, have you then been so blind."

She raised her head from my shoulder. "I do not know what you mean," she stammered.

I took George's letter from my pocket. "Now," I said, leading the still trembling girl towards the door of my bedroom, "go in there, bathe your face and compose yourself, and then read this letter. Think well over its contents, for a great decision that affects your whole life lies in your hands to-day, and may Heaven give you wisdom to judge aright!" And then closing the door, I turned away and busied myself with arranging some papers in my secretary.

It was not long before the bedroom door was again thrown open. I turned, and beheld Ursula standing upon the threshold. Gone were the tears and the agitation of a few moments before. Love, radiant and triumphant, looked from her glowing eyes, and transfigured her beauty into the semblance of crowned and conquering royalty. I knew the answer that awaited her lover as I looked upon her. Of the two messages that had reached her that day, the latest one had met the warmest welcome. As I gazed, my heart throbbed an exulting greeting to this fair vision of unclouded prosperity and perfect love.

"Oh, Lady Jane!" I cried, "at last you have entered into your kingdom."

The radiant eyes were veiled beneath their shadowy lashes as she replied, "No,—I have found my king!"

Summoned by a telegram, George returned the next day. I was present when the lovers met. No longer agitated, and blushing with the shy timidity of a girl whose love, as yet unsought, is unavowed even to herself, she came towards him with the calm and noble composure of a woman who has yielded up her whole heart to the keeping of him who loves her. She stretched out her two hands towards him, and he folded them in his own with a passionate eagerness in their clasp. Their eyes met, hers deep and tranquil as the summer sea, his restless and burning with a feverish light. Neither spoke,

> "For it is with feelings as with waters,
> The shallows murmur, but the deeps are dumb."

Hand locked in hand they stood for one supreme blissful moment. And I, rising softly, stole from the room and left them to their gladness. In the solitude of my bedroom, where I had taken refuge, I could muse on all that had occurred, and could indulge in the selfish thrill of repining that, despite my best endeavors, persistently marred my rejoicing over the happiness of the young creatures that I have loved so fondly.

For I have lost them,—I know that well. Not that prosperity will chill their affection for me or change their natures. The pure gold of a tried and lofty character that has withstood the corroding acids of poverty, can well endure unchanged the sullying influences of wealth. Circumstances do not leave an imprint on such souls, any more than a seal

of engraved agate can make an impression on a diamond. But the boy and girl that I loved and aided and consoled,—that came to sit beside my hearth, and to draw beneath my lamp, whose joys and sorrows were all confided to me,—they are dead and gone, and the bright and happy beings that have succeeded to them have neither part nor lot in my life. I, who sit in the shadow, what have I to do with those who dwell in the sunshine? I give these darlings of my heart up to their new and brilliant existence as I might send two caged birds forth to the joys of liberty and the glory of the summer woodland and the summer skies. I rejoice in their freedom and their gladness, but my heart stands vacant and desolate as the empty cage.

CHAPTER XIV.

"A SOUND OF MARRIAGE BELLS."

THEY are married and gone,—but before I tell of the wedding I must record the minor events that preceded that crowning incident.

The day after George's arrival I had a long interview with Mr. Morris Matthews, in which the fortune and prospects of the young heiress were very fully discussed. I learned with pleasure that her wealth, though less considerable than I had been led to imagine from Richard Vane's reputation as

an archi-millionnaire, was still very great, comprising some six hundred thousand dollars in first-class investments, besides the house and furniture on Financier Square, Quakeropolis, which was worth at least one hundred thousand more, even in the present depressed condition of real-estate. I knew the house well; a large double mansion of some forty feet front, looking out on the trees and turf of the beautiful square, and furnished richly and solidly throughout, though in a somewhat old-fashioned style. I pleased myself with imagining Ursula flitting from room to room, and dispelling the images of selfishness and vindictiveness that seemed to haunt them with her fair presence and winning ways.

"But for the shrinkage of values which has taken place within the last few years," observed Mr. Matthews, "Miss Vane would have come into possession of a far larger property than she does at present. Even as it is, it is no mean inheritance to fall to the share of a single young lady. And she will very probably espouse some foreign duke or count by virtue of her income."

I smilingly assured him that there was every prospect of her speedily sharing her wealth with a true American citizen. He was only half satisfied, however, when he heard of her engagement.

"An artist! one of the most unpractical and unbusiness-like of all classes of men."

"I beg your pardon. Doré, Meissonier, Cabanel, are all excellent managers of their large incomes."

"Still, I am glad that Mr. Vane left all his prop-

erty in trust, so that the young people cannot get hold of the principal to squander it."

"Now please enlighten me on one point. What in the world ever possessed Mr. Vane, who appears to have enjoyed excellent health, both mental and physical, up to the period of his last fatal illness, to make so odd a will? Why did he not leave his estate at once to Ursula without prescribing that very singular delay of six years? And then the revelation of his secret made by writing to his son, and the penalties attached to any indiscretion respecting the secret on that son's part. It is all past my comprehension."

"And yet the explanation is simple enough, if you will only recall the peculiarities of Mr. Vane's nature. He was nothing if not vindictive. He had fed his feelings of resentment against his son till they had assumed the proportions of a monomania. To have willed away at once his entire estate from that son would have been to have inflicted on him a single, severe, but not unexpected blow. But to so arrange matters that for six years this detested son should be forced to live face to face with the child who had supplanted him, and who was to enjoy the wealth that he considered lawfully his own, and from all participation in which he was to be excluded, was to invent a Tantalus punishment of sharpest aggravation. Moreover, he did not want his granddaughter to be brought up as an heiress, or to consider herself one till she had attained to years of womanhood. Still, I think he would have ceded that last point had it not been for

the perfecting of his revenge. The day that saw the walls of Quakeropolis placarded with the name of Mrs. Stephen Vane as leading actress in a burlesque troupe, aroused in his nature the slumbering fiend of undying vindictiveness. And but for her furnishing so ready an instrument for the carrying out of this last refinement of revenge, I doubt if Miss Vane would have been constituted his heiress after all, despite the claims of blood, and her undoubted good descent, as well on the mother's as the father's side."

"I differ from you there. Richard Vane worshipped the idea of the Vane family. He was not likely to will away his money from one of his own blood, so long as the individual concerned was guiltless of running counter to his own cherished prejudices and convictions."

"Well, it is all right at last, and I am very glad for Miss Vane's sake. She seems to be in all respects a most charming young lady. It was really fortunate that I was ordered to Europe for mental rest and for change of air by my physician this autumn, so that I could attend to this important affair in person. I suppose that Miss Vane will soon sail for America to look after her property and to investigate matters herself."

"Not till after her marriage, I believe. She is desirous that the wedding shall take place in Paris, but the date is not yet fixed. Remember, it was only a few days ago that the young people learned that it was possible for them to marry. But the engagement will not be a long one,—of that you may rest assured."

"I see how it is, and I wish the young couple joy with all my heart. And I suppose we shall have the pleasure of welcoming you back to Quakeropolis, as you seem to be so intimate a friend of Miss Vane's."

I shook my head. "I shall never leave Paris," I answered. "Here will I live and die, and here shall I be buried. I have a vision of my last resting-place in the Protestant cemetery of St. Germain, though I should prefer a grave in Père la Chaise with a nice flat tombstone in some sunny spot, on which the working-girls could sit on a Sunday while they ate their dinners."

"Nonsense! We shall have you back in Quakeropolis yet with your friend Mrs. Brandon."

"What function could I fill in the heiress's household? That of companion? She will have her husband. That of housekeeper? She must learn to fill that post herself. And I could not bring myself to eat of the bitter bread of dependence, even when proffered to me by such beloved hands. No, my course in life is fixed. I shall not return to Quakeropolis to wander about the streets and homes that once knew my presence so well, like the uneasy ghost of the once gay, society-loving Jane Anson. Many and dear are the friends that I left behind me, and often does my heart yearn to behold their faces once more. But the Jane Anson of the past is dead. The one who lives today must work hard to earn her daily bread. Nor will I even return as a visitor. Do you not remember the story of how one day some distinguished

personage visited the galleys at Toulon, and obtained for the galley-slaves a respite from their chains and their toil for a single day? When they returned the next day to their labor, they all complained bitterly that it seemed the harder for the brief respite that they had enjoyed. So in a lesser degree I shrink from any interruption in my usual work. Therefore I shall not return to the city of my birth as the guest of Richard Vane's heiress. And against going back as her dependent, as a pensioner on her bounty, however freely bestowed,—against such a course as that my old instincts and training as a lady rise up and cry aloud."

Mr. Matthews smiled indulgently and looked unconvinced, but he said no more. And I, having argued the point before with Ursula, standing firm against such potent arguments as her soft arms around my neck and her kisses on my cheek, felt more than ever confirmed in the course of action that I had prescribed for myself. No,—call it pride, perversity, folly, or what you will, I can never bring myself to trail the rags and remnants of my ancient splendors through the streets of Quakeropolis in Ursula Brandon's train.

Ursula Brandon! How strangely sounds the new name of my darling. I have not got used to it even yet. But stranger still is the change that has passed over the lives of those two lovers in so short a time. Verily, one flourish of old Mr. Vane's pen has proved as potent as the wave of a magician's wand. All is over at last,—the struggles

and the uncertainty, the weary days of toil, the striving after an unattainable future for George, the slow shaping out of a visioned career for Ursula. Even "Lady Jane Grey" lies in my desk forgotten. Will it ever be finished? I doubt it much, though many a manager who would have turned aside from the work of the starving artist, would give all due and respectful consideration to a production from the pen of the heiress's husband. But George was not born a dramatic poet. He was by nature an actor, and painting and verse were not the ministering spirits that came at his call.

He will make Ursula a noble and devoted husband. She had to endure many sharp remonstrances on her choice, particularly from her father, and even Mrs. Clyde remarked plaintively that she ought to have waited to see a little "high-toned society" before making up her mind to marry; Mrs. Chadbrooke paid her a special visit to implore her to consider the matter, and to offer for her inspection two French counts, a Russian prince, and a German baron. But Ursula would not so much as consent to an introduction to these unknown foreign adorers, who had one and all been smitten with mad love for her on hearing of her accession of fortune, and that though not one of them had ever seen her. "I do not want to become a titled lady," she remarked. "I want simply to be a loved and happy wife." And that she will undoubtedly be as the wife of George Brandon. What his peculiarly sweet and winning nature lacks in force she in her vigorous intellectuality will abundantly supply.

She will reign as a queen over her household, but he will be a most adoring king-consort. Whatever she does will be right in his eyes. Moreover, the purity and uprightness of a nature that withstood unharmed the trials and temptations of poverty in the past, afford the best possible guarantee for her unsullied bliss hereafter.

I cannot say that George was entirely happy during the period that elapsed between the revelation of the purport of Mr. Vane's will and his marriage. He shrank from receiving everything, even the necessaries of life, from the hands of his betrothed. She in the exulting generosity of an open-handed, kindly nature that finds itself free to follow its impulses for the first time, would have loaded him with gifts, have installed him in the most luxurious rooms that could be found in Paris, would have placed horses and carriages at his disposal, and in all ways would have had him treated at once as the acknowledged sharer in her wealth. But he kept aloof from everything that savored of splendor or luxury, and would fain have gone back to his old quarters in the Quartier Latin. But his studio had been let, so he was forced to put up with a room at Madame Magne's as a compromise. Ursula and her grandmother were meanwhile settled in a handsome suite of furnished apartments on the Boulevard Haussmann, and Ursula took there her first lessons in housekeeping, being rather awed by the grandeur of her own maid, and standing not a little in terror of the dignified man-cook. The complicated shopping necessary to the getting up of her

trousseau occupied much time, and driving and visiting took up scarcely less, so that George was wont piteously to complain that he saw little or nothing of his intended bride, and used to come continually to me for consolation. This I usually administered to him in the shape of a reminder that in a very few weeks he and Ursula would be entirely thrown on the society of each other, first on shipboard and afterwards in their new home beyond the seas. Not that Ursula was ever really neglectful of him or of anybody in fact,—dear child,—but it was hard for him to comprehend how dresses and bonnets had to be purchased, and the calls returned of all the people who had suddenly found out a depth of fond adoration for Ursula Vane, hitherto unsuspected, both by themselves and by its object. Mrs. Chadbrooke took to calling her "Ursie" on the spot, and the Baroness Blankenswergh came to see her and invited her to her next musical party, and requested permission to bring the Duchesse de St. Aymon to call. Which permission, it is needless to remark, was politely but firmly refused, and the invitation as well.

The wedding was magnificent. Ursula declared that as this was the first entertainment she had ever given in Paris, she meant to have it as handsome as possible. Such an intent might have proved difficult of realization in America, combined with the recentness and temporary nature of her installation, but in Paris there is nothing more easy. You may settle yourself in a ready-furnished home of just the shade of splendor or simplicity that you

may require, and thereafter, if you wish to give a ball or a reception, nothing can be more easy. There are immense establishments that supply every possible requisite for any kind of an entertainment that may be desired. If you want to give a ball you can hire every single thing that you may want, plates, dishes, knives, forks, table-linen, candelabra, chandeliers, epergnes, chairs, a platform for an orchestra, nay, an entire ball-room itself, if you have a place to put it, with silken hangings and velvet-covered seats. Do you desire to give private theatricals? You can hire your stage, scenery, curtain, footlights, etc., etc., and transform your back drawing-room into a miniature Comédie Française at a moment's notice. In fact, there is no essential portion of an entertainment of any kind that may not be hired in Paris, excepting the guests, and those too, I fancy, could be had by paying for them, did we only know where to find the agencies that let out such articles.

Ursula, however, needed no such adjuncts to the supernumeraries required for her one brilliant appearance on the social stage of Parisianized-American life. Her father, by virtue of his birth and old associations, knew nearly every one worth knowing in the American colony, so the wedding-reception of his daughter was as splendid and thronged as the most ambitious heart could have desired. The deft hands of Parisian florists had transformed the halls and stairways into something of the likeness of a terraced garden, and the drawing-rooms themselves looked like a conservatory. Tall palms and

tree-ferns filled the windows. The mantel-shelves and cabinet-tops had become banks of perfumed blossoms. The refreshments were served amid a wilderness of variegated roses. As to the bride, her beauty showed in full magnificence amid the elegance of her surroundings and the tasteful richness of her attire. She scorned all suggestions as to a wedding-dress of severe simplicity. "A woman seldom marries more than once," she declared, "and to do honor to the great event of her life she ought to array herself in her choicest garments." So Ursula came forth on her marriage-day enveloped in a mist of daintiest point-lace, whose costly clouds were pierced here and there by the rainbow-flashes of a few great diamonds. The bridegroom, on the other hand, as befits a refined gentleman, was attired with the severest simplicity. They were indeed a goodly pair, she with her delicate maiden bloom and great spiritual-looking eyes, and he superb in his fair and stalwart manliness. Mrs. Clyde, in the coveted dark-blue velvet from Worth's, swept gracefully through the rooms, her old-time elegance and courtly ways showing to much advantage when set off by rich and appropriate dress. But wonderful to relate! the old lady's once canary-yellow locks had

> "Changed to white in a single night,
> As men's have grown from sudden fright."

Beneath a snowy amplitude of tresses, close curled and compactly arranged, her still delicate features seemed positively rejuvenated. "My dear," she whispered to me confidentially, "how do you like

me with white hair? I should always have worn it, you know, because it is the very height of the fashion, but gray hair was so very expensive that really, till dear Ursula's change of fortune, I could not afford such extravagance."

Mr. Vane was of course present, irreproachably attired as usual, refined and interesting-looking, with his silvery hair and high-bred features and long, slender white hands, and apparently just so much concerned in the marriage and departure of his daughter as he would have been on the completion and delivery of a portrait. Probably the only emotion that he felt on the occasion was that of satisfaction in the idea that he no longer had her grandmother and herself to support. Mrs. Bryan, most beauteous to behold in a toilette of dark ruby velvet, was among the first to arrive, but she slipped smiling away from the fervent thanks that Ursula tried to express to her, less for the gorgeous *porte-bonheur* bracelet of pearls and diamonds that had formed her wedding gift, than for all the kindnesses wherewith she had cheered the chilled, restricted life of the lonely girl. Very fervent too was the kiss that Ursula bestowed on Mrs. Upton. As to Blanche Upton and Viola Bryan, they were among the bridesmaids, who numbered besides Kitty Harding and the "Siamese twins" of the colony, Nelly Challis and Kitty Warner. Mrs. Chadbrooke was of course present, in a pale pearl-gray brocade, in which she looked stouter than ever. Madame Leponge, in a sweet, girlish costume of white cloth trimmed with silver braid, and with a Gainsbor-

ough hat lined with blue silk and trimmed with pink roses on her girlish head, was a model of innocent playfulness. "It is a pity," she remarked, patronizingly, to me, "that Mrs. Brandon has become affiliated with this Western set, but of course when she returns to Paris she can cut them all. That is what I mean to do when I go back to New York." Mrs. Professor Spinks was not present, Ursula having cruelly refused to accede for the request for an invitation, conveyed to her in a note in the lady's own handwriting. Mrs. Harding and I as usual watched the whole brilliant pageant from a secluded nook near one of the large windows, and I was much amused at the scorn of my old friend as she noticed the caressing eagerness wherewith the bride was greeted by dozens of people who had known her slightly for years, and had never in the smallest degree troubled themselves about the poor child's existence when she was poor and lonely, and when a drive or a dance formed an epoch in her wellnigh pleasureless existence.

"Human nature, my dear old friend," I responded, as she gave vent to some scrap of specially bitter cynicism. Let us take the world as we find it. It is very much like the Pekin silks that are so much in vogue nowadays; a stripe of good and a stripe of evil in about equal proportions."

Well, it all came to an end at last, even to the final embraces and last good-byes. I turned away with Ursula's tears upon my cheek, and with my hand aching from George's parting clasp, for our farewells were spoken then and there. Accompa-

nied by Mrs. Clyde the newly-wedded pair were to leave for Havre that evening, and sail for America (where business matters connected with Ursula's property loudly claimed their attention) on the following day.

They are gone,—and I sit here alone in my shabby little parlor, that looks all the drearier since the bright faces and youthful voices that lent it animation have passed away. My work is done, for the bread-earner must toil though head and heart may ache alike. The dull atmosphere of a winter's day reigns around me. My fire has died out, and the room is cold and cheerless as is my life. My tears drop one by one on the paper before me,—I miss my darlings sadly,—I yearn for their presence with an unspeakable longing. Shall I ever see them more? I cannot tell. Ursula did indeed speak of a speedy return, did she fail to find life in the United States agreeable. But I have little hope that she will ever exchange her luxurious home for a Parisian apartment, unless indeed George's artistic tastes lure him again across the sea. But I am growing too old to find comfort in the possibilities of the future; I crave my consolations in the present. But there is no use in sitting brooding here. I must do something to change the current of my ideas,—but what? I have tried to read, but my thoughts wander from the page. I would be but a dull visitor to-day were I to go to call on the best and dearest of my friends. Stay,—I remember now that Ursula begged me to call at a certain number on the Rue Neuve des Mathurins to attend to something for her, said something

to be imparted to me by a person that I shall find there, one Madame Dorothée, I think she said. However, I have all the particulars written down in my note-book. Well, I will go and see what it is that I am to do. To occupy myself about Ursula's affairs is to still have her with me, so to speak. I will go at once.

I find the house without any trouble; a well-situated mansion, overlooking the garden of the Chapelle Expiatoire on the Boulevard Haussmann, the grounds of which extend back to the street in question. I ask for Madame Dorothée, and the concierge directs me to ring at the left-hand door on the second floor. I comply with the directions, and the door is opened by a stout, cheery-looking, middle-aged woman, wearing a neat white cap and apron.

"Madame Dorothée, if you please."

"I am she, Madame—or is this Mademoiselle Ansonne?"

I answer to this form of my name readily enough, having become accustomed to many more startling distortions of it during my residence in Paris.

"I am first to show Mademoiselle the apartment, and then I have a letter for Mademoiselle."

Rather surprised at the whole proceeding I enter the pretty spacious antechamber, with a Turkish carpet on the floor and *portières* of striped Turkish stuffs draping the doorways. Dorothée then conducts me into the drawing-room, furnished with Aubosson tapestry and gilt wood, the curtains and carpet matching the furniture-covers, which bear designs from La Fontaine's Fables. A table in

Florentine mosaic occupies the centre of the room, and on it stands a Barbedienne bronze, a reproduction of one of my favorite statues, the "Diana" of Houdon. The small gilt *étagères* that are fitted into the corners of the room, and the low tables that stand here and there, are strewn with graceful and costly knick-knacks,—cups of Sèvres porcelain, statuettes in old Dresden, dainty ornaments in oxidized silver, in ivory, and in malachite. Against the wall, panelled in white and gold, a small sunny Diaz faces a charming female head by Jules Lefebvre. The clock in bronze is modelled after Doré's design of "Love assailing Time." Then I enter a small room fitted as a library, and furnished with well-filled bookcases in ebony, an inlaid secretary, a Persian carpet on the floor, and on the walls some charming water-colors, among which I recognize George's "Lohengrin" and his sketch of Ursula in the character of "Juliet." The secretary stands open, and across the blotting-book of Russia leather, whose silver monogram I cannot stay to decipher, lies a gold pen in an ivory handle all ready for use. I long to glance over the volumes that fill the bookcases with intent to learn if the owner of this charming retreat be French or American, but I follow my guide into the solitary bedroom, hung and furnished with a black-grounded cretonne, with a pattern of birds and flowers in brilliant hues, and then into the dining-room, with its sideboard of carved oak and chairs covered with maroon-colored leather studded with silver nails, and so into the kitchen, where the rows upon rows of copper sauce-

pans that are so dear to the heart of a French cook are shining against the wall. Then Dorothée opens one press after another cunningly concealed in the wall, and shows me piles of table-cloths and napkins in delicate damask, and fine linen sheets and pillow-cases, and stacks of towels, from the finest of toilet towels down to the multitudinous and inevitable "torchon" that plays so large a part in the economy of French housekeeping.

"The glass and china have not come home yet, Mademoiselle, as the monograms are not finished. And the parlor chandelier is to be hung to-morrow, —it had to be altered to be used for gas. There is gas in every room—even to the bedroom. And did Mademoiselle notice the drop-light beside the secretary in the library? And the reacting-chair in antique tapestry? But I am forgetting the letter for Mademoiselle,—here it is." It is produced from the depths of one of Dorothée's wide apron-pockets, and she retreats to the kitchen, while I draw near to one of the windows of the parlor, and unfolding the missive, which simply bears my name in Ursula's handwriting upon the envelope, I read as follows:

"DEAR AUNT JANE,—You have often told me of how much you wished to go to housekeeping, and how you would certainly do so as soon as you could afford to buy your furniture. So George and I thought that, as a parting gift from your two children, we would select some pretty furniture for you and try to make for you a pleasant little home.

Everything in this apartment is yours, but not wholly George's gift and mine. For we asked Mrs. Bryan to aid us with her taste in the choice of the articles, and she insisted upon just putting on the finishing touches, as she said. So all the ornaments, the bronzes, clocks, books, and pictures, and the beautiful china are her contribution to your new home. You will find your lease and a receipt for three years' rent in advance in the upper left-hand drawer of your secretary. I think you will like the servant that I have engaged for you; she lived for five years with us when we were at housekeeping, and she is an excellent cook, and is honest and economical besides. So as you would not accept a share in our home, dear Aunt Jane, we have tried to shape out for you one of your own. And that you may long enjoy it is the heartfelt wish of

"Your affectionate children,

"GEORGE AND URSULA BRANDON."

I stood for some moments in bewilderment, unable to realize the full meaning of the words I had just perused. The soft *frou-frou* of a woman's dress caused me to look up. Mrs. Bryan stood in the doorway, her great blue eyes shining with the joy that she seems to prize above all the rest in her richly-dowered lot, namely, that of giving pleasure to others.

"I was driving past," she said, "and saw your windows open, so I thought that I would come up and be the first to bid you welcome to your new home."

I could not speak. All the varied emotions that filled my heart,—the love, the gratitude, the glad surprise,—that thrilled its chords even to pain, found vent only in the long, passionate embrace wherein I folded her. Language holds for us as yet no words wherein to give utterance to feelings such as these.

"Tell me how to thank you,—teach me the words wherein to express one tithe of all that I feel," I said at last.

"Do not thank me," she answered, softly, "only love me!"

Thus slowly but surely does Time bring about Life's compensations. The old maid has gained two dear children to love and cherish her, the stranger in a strange land has won the fondest and most faithful of friends, the homeless has found again a home. The better days whereof George and I so long despaired have dawned at last—even for me.

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